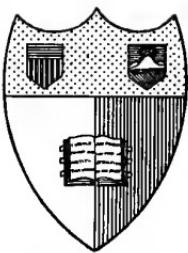


PLATO
AND
THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

EMIL REICH



Cornell University Library
Ithaca, New York

BOUGHT WITH THE INCOME OF THE
SAGE ENDOWMENT FUND
THE GIFT OF
HENRY W. SAGE

1891

Cornell University Library
B395 .R34

Plato as an introduction to modern criti



3 1924 028 994 337
olin



Cornell University Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

PLATO
AS AN INTRODUCTION TO MODERN
CRITICISM OF LIFE

PLATO

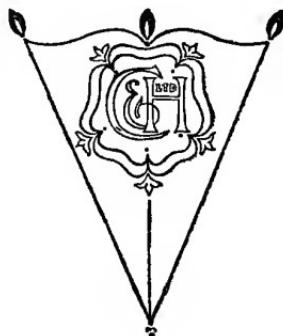
AS AN INTRODUCTION TO MODERN CRITICISM OF LIFE

BY

EMIL REICH

(DR. JURIS)

AUTHOR OF "SUCCESS AMONG NATIONS," "FOUNDATIONS OF
MODERN EUROPE," ETC.



LONDON
CHAPMAN & HALL, LTD.

1906

PREFACE

THE following pages were taken down in longhand by two secretaries during the two courses I gave in London on some ideas of Plato in Michaelmas term 1905, and in Lent term 1906. I do not prepare my lectures either by writing them out, or by preparing elaborate or even short notes for them ; I prepare them only by constantly thinking of their subjects. The consequence is that I am unable to reproduce any lecture as I have actually given it. In correcting the work of my secretaries, I find, as my readers will not fail to see, that while much of the substance of the lectures is given, many another point, connecting-link, and shade has disappeared. For this, the indulgence of the reader is requested. But for my hearers, who constantly asked for these pages, and were kind enough to promise to put up with their necessary incompleteness, the present book would not have been published at all. With all its shortcomings it may yet serve as a little corrective to so many learnedly inane works written on

PREFACE

the Athenian sage by men, who probably know Greek, but have only a very poor notion of the Life of which Plato speaks. Plato is neither mystical nor abstract. In his time he lectured to ordinary men of the world, taking his illustrations from Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor, Sicily, the Balkan peninsula and southern Greece. On the basis of his ideas, I tried to treat of modern life, taking my illustrations from England, France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Russia, and America.

EMIL REICH.

33, ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.

May 16th, 1906.

PLATO

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

FIRST COURSE

CHAPTER I

It will be necessary to premise in a few words the nature of these papers, and to characterize their special features, in order to grasp clearly the full significance of what is termed philosophy, and the philosophy of Plato.

When one is told that there are to be chapters on Plato, one is inclined to say, "Oh! what a learned thing!" or, "It is a sort of an erudite affair." No doubt Plato can be made to look erudite; he was certainly one of the best-informed minds of the world. But it should not frighten one into thinking that he is beyond comprehension, or that his writings must be left only to philologists and professors to fathom their meaning. There is, indeed, a far more important attitude of Plato than being erudite, that is, his power of touching the world and each individual being by the very simplicity of his teaching.

PLATO

The whole philosophy of Plato can be summed up into two parts, that is, either the criticism of Life, or the criticism of Thought. Plato's criticisms, in fact, bear directly on the intellectual and the emotional machinery of mankind. Both very complicated, it may be said, but not so complicated as may be supposed; on the contrary, they bear so intimately on all the problems of daily life, that it is hoped they will, in the end, appear quite simple.

Plato appeals to the world, not as an ancient, but really as a most modern writer. He deals with problems of action, problems affecting every phase of present day life; they are all problems, and problems extremely interesting to English-speaking people. Indeed, it is not possible to mention a modern problem that is not elaborately discussed by Plato in all its bearings. In all this there is no erudition, it is real Life. It is Life so complicated, so rich, as to be ever presenting new phases for thought, and from which even the apparently more complicated life of the present day does not differ.

The more one sees life and studies Plato, the more one is impressed by his writings. One does not grasp the meaning of Plato on first reading his works, or when one reads him in the earlier years of one's life. For instance, if one has lived in America for some time, and studied everything of life, one begins to understand the whole Symposium of Plato, every type of man and woman. And

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

yet Plato had never heard of the United States, or of France, or England ; countries which have developed types which were never known to Plato. The man thus stands out not only as a professor of philosophy, but a seer. He thus makes a most profound impression ; he becomes a great prophet, in fact. And in his prophetic phase he foreshadows the Catholic Church ; gives a clear outline of the hierarchy of the Church ; and foreshadows Gothic architecture. The world may shiver with astonishment that 350 years before the Catholic Church was established, he outlines the Church and the character of that Church, when the personality of Jesus was unknown ! Of what nature was such a man ? There can be no doubt that here was a mind far above mere erudition, and imbued with very strong principles of suggestiveness and clear-sightedness.

The study of Philosophy begins with Plato, and however much the matter may be discussed, Plato can never be exhausted. Like all practical and imperial nations, the English are very authoritative ; they insist that some one must be at the head of every branch of knowledge ; he must be quoted as an authority. In music the appeal is to the authority of Beethoven ; Lord Kelvin is the authority on science ; and so on with other branches of knowledge. In Philosophy there is no such thing. As the old adage truly said, “Plato is a good friend of mine, but truth is greater.”

PLATO

Before proceeding further it is necessary to consider where the difficulty in understanding Plato lies. There is no difficulty whatever; he is, in fact, very simple, and can be understood by a child. His charm lies, indeed, in simplicity and dramatic style. On the stage, for instance, the most commonplace statements are made; a famous American actress was once heard telling her husband to take a seat; there was nothing in that, but everything in the dramatic style in which the request was uttered. A gesture, or a word, and one feels there is a something, a tragic veil behind it. This is Plato, this is Art. Art is thus expressed delicately, not too explicitly. It veils and disguises as much as it expresses. And this is Plato. His writings may be looked upon as ordinary prattle, but everything in them has a meaning.

In Plato's Symposium, Alcibiades enters with a little flute girl. Plato says he is drunk. All this is prattle to the ordinary reader, but when read thoughtfully, and his meaning fully seen, there will be found innuendoes, suggestions and veiled thoughts, which are lost on the superficial reader. These are the pith of his dialogues, and it is this that is called Art.

With Plato, philosophy was superior to poetry. Poetry was the very soul of the Greeks, who looked upon poets as modern people do on their preachers. They went to the theatres to get that

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

emotional stir which is now got in our churches ; and to them Aristophanes was a preacher.

Plato is in prose, what the Parthenon is in stone. It is absolute art. The mind requires nothing too explicit either from the one or the other. It is not asked why certain things are depicted on the friezes and not on the metopes. It is not questioned why this picture does not portray the defeat of the Persians, or that the triumph of the Athenians. The whole is taken as a consummate work of art, with all the subtle meaning which appeals to the mind.

When Socrates talks of love, he does not put it into the mouth of an ordinary woman, but of a virgin priestess. And so with Plato ; he disguises his meaning just as readily as he tells it.

Not so with modern philosophers. Take for instance, Schopenhauer, Herbert Spencer, etc. They state bluntly what they have to say, and never disguise it. With them it is like a problem in mathematics ; everything is explicit, technical, colourless, and so, extremely un-Platonic.

Plato, on the other hand, is intensely artistic. He clothes his sayings in the form of myths, of a story ; he adumbrates truth. With him it is, and, it is not ; he wavers between light and darkness. How really better this than to lay down a fixed rule. Consider his myth of Atlantis ; that even anticipated America. His was the power of striding over centuries, over time. All this

PLATO

makes him just as charming as difficult; but nobody is so easy to understand.

He lived in Athens, saw daily the glory of the Parthenon, yet not a word is there in his writings of this perfect incarnation of art, though he mentions the Erechtheum and the Odeon. The reason for this will be seen presently.

The Greeks divide the arts into two classes; and Plato belonged to one of these classes. There are arts which do not need representation to be enjoyed; they can be gazed on; there they are in their finished beauty, and they need no interpreter. Of these are Architecture and Sculpture. On the other hand there are arts which need an interpreter, some one to unfold the subtle, hidden meanings which appeal to the emotions. To this class belong music, the drama, singing, poetry, and dancing. The first class is said to be *Apotelic*, and the second *Music*. Plato is distinctly *music* and not *apotelistic*. Plato cannot be approached as one would approach a piece of sculpture. With him is needed a very fine interpreter, as in music or the drama. And so with Shakespeare, who also needs an interpreter. The simple words of Hamlet to Ophelia, "Get thee into a nunnery," may sound like the "prattle" of Plato, but, like that "prattle," these few words are a volume.

Plato was indeed a *music* artist (*ἡ πρακτική*, to use a Greek word, as opposed to *theoretics*)—he

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

was *music* from beginning to end : and to understand him thoroughly, a thorough interpreter is needed ; more than a Cook's guide to indicate what he really is.

It has been said that Plato is extremely simple to understand ; indeed, the words he uses are simple, every-day words. In drama the simplest words are used. Shakespeare uses as few words as possible, and of the simplest character. Not so Swinburne, whose words are three times as numerous. The difference between the two should be carefully noted ; where in the one case the characters often jar on the nerves, in the other they unburden the whole conflict of their souls in the simplest of words. Aristophanes, being a comic poet, had to manufacture words to meet occasions, which are certainly not simple. Sophocles, on the other hand, uses simple words, and his plays have the true ring of *music* art. The difference can best be understood when music is heard, which has the effect of belabouring one's nerves instead of appealing to one's artistic sense ; and such music is known as *enharmonic* music. But is that real music ? Mozart is as simple as Plato, and his also was the true *music* art. Where this true art does not exist, the effect is like that of a passing emotion and shiver, a make-believe that there are things in the world that do not exist ; that there is neither cause nor effect.

In Philosophy there is no last word. It is a

PLATO

never-ending stream of creativeness, or continual thought. There is no end to it ; there is no climax. It is made up of dramatic things, but it is no finished drama ; it is, in fact, going on all the time. It is a *music* art, but not *apotelesic*. It is like the dance in Sparta, which was considered a great art. Dance and poetry were considered one and the same thing, and no man in Sparta was considered to have done his duty to the State who had not cultivated the art. It appealed to their artistic sense ; the fine outlines and the rhythm and beauty of the movements speaks to us immediately ; it is continuous ; the movements are inexhaustible.

And so with Philosophy ; it requires continuous interpretation. It is possible to write on Plato in every age, but it is not possible to exhaust Plato. It is when people are not artistic that they do not care for Plato.

Imperial races are *apotelesic* and not *music* ; they look to material things, and have no time to cultivate the *music* arts. With them everything is finite ; all must be by rule ; all approved by some authority. England is a case in point. Here we prefer Aristotle to Plato ; we say Plato is a prattler, and is not to be taken seriously. An Englishman is ashamed to learn music or dancing ; he thinks it is unmanly. All this is a serious drawback. Every nation is either Platonic or Aristotelian ; but there is here in Plato a new way

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

of making nations *music*, of giving them more infinite ideas ; that there is no beginning, no middle, no end, but a continuous, never-ending stream of life and thought ; this is the vast Platonic vista. *There* is a world of worlds. *This* is *music* ; *this* is Plato. It is not finite, it is not architecture. It is impossible to add a column to it ; it is equally impossible to take away or alter a capital. It is not sculpture ; for great sculpture is so perfect that even if a limb be lopped off, it still looks perfect ; if the head be taken off the body still gives a sense of perfect symmetry. Philosophy is not like that ; there is nothing finite about it ; it is all change ; and of all the exponents of philosophy, Plato is the greatest ; he is *music*.

All the works of Plato exist at the present day ; with trifling exceptions, none have been lost, and his developments can be followed as his works are read. There is in them constant development, progress, change. What he said in the Laws he unsaid in the Republic ; what he said yesterday, he unsaid to-day ; and this constant change is a characteristic of true philosophy. Philosophy must not be likened to science or knowledge, where some eminent scientist has solved definitely some abstruse problem, and another has solved another problem. In philosophy, each philosopher has thrown his net into the same sea, and each has picked out a few fish, and is well aware that he

PLATO

has solved no problem. A Spanish proverb well says that “every single man is a world by himself”; and in this light must philosophy be taken, that it is circumscribed by no finite ideas; that every individual is partly *apotelesic* and partly *music*; more *music* at times than at other times.

Philosophy cannot be reckoned as a consoling power for mankind in their doubt as to what they are. For a man and a woman in active life, philosophy is not a consolation, it is the intensest intellectual enjoyment that can be obtained. It is like a man placed on a commanding position in Greece, with a telescope in his hand. He surveys the exquisite scenery of nature, and derives from it the intensest enjoyment, and his nerves thrill with the beauty before him. This is real enjoyment. He has not made the panorama his own, but he sees it. So with Moses when he saw the Promised Land; he enjoyed the outlook but never set foot on it or possessed it.

Lessing said, “If God really had in one hand Truth, and in the other only a desire for Truth, which would you take?” The answer was, “I would fall into his left hand and ask for the desire for Truth, because Truth is after all only for God.” All this is true humility, a phase of mind which cannot be expressed in Greek, a language which has no word to express *Humility*. There is the same want in other languages; in French, for instance, which has no word to correspond to the

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

English word *joke*, which is an English thing altogether, and yet the French have excelled in wit. And so too with the German verb *Ich will*; the strong-willed English have nothing corresponding to it. Express all these in borrowed language and it does not mean the same thing; the thing itself is wanting. Why does not language express such things?

There is another aspect of Plato to consider. Plato was not only artistic; he was intensely religious; he was the real introduction to the study of religion, which has, since his time, occupied millions of minds. And as it is from him that the fundamental truth of art and philosophy has been derived, so it can be claimed that from him flows the fundamental truth of Religion. But it must be interpreted, it must be understood. Like a real artist he does not want to be clear. Definiteness, explicitness, all these belong to finite art; for this an authority is needed; it is, in fact, the matter of a "coach." But when we come to art, *music-art*, there is the beginning of art, philosophy, and religion. It is the suggestion, the veiled thought, the innuendo, the *sous-entendu* underlying it all, and for these is needed, not a "coach" but an interpreter.

Plato has been known as a teacher of politics; perhaps to most people the most interesting part of the teachings of that philosopher. It was he who invented what is called the Idea, and Europe

PLATO

may be said to be separated from the rest of the world by the fact of its adoption of Ideas. Europe is full of them, and they have made the very life of Europe. Idealism, more or less intense, was the essence of Greek life, and it was Plato who brought into the world Ideas. It may be truly said, "there is no banquet of Ideas unless Plato is there." There are religious ideals in the Catholic Church ; artistic ideals in Gothic architecture, in sculpture ; all history is, in fact, an attempt to realize ideals ; there are ideals of literature, philosophy, politics, and Art is the language of ideals ; unless, then, ideals are cultivated no progress is made in the work of Art. And it is for the reason that Europe is so full of ideas that it is, as it were, apart from the rest of the world. Perhaps America will also have it so, for there is a cultivation of an ideal, (the idea of Plato realized in one aspect. An American, a friend of the author, once said, "We have the old Platonic leaven in us," referring to the propensity for large fortunes ; but the confession was made that they were bored to death with it. Life does not consist of money-making only ; there is something beyond it, and unless mankind have that something, they do not derive that intense enjoyment that life should give, they are not happy. Take China, for instance, there they have no ideals whatever. Confucius teaches the material, and that in mediocrity—mediocrity in everything ; and the result is that 450 millions

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

of people in China are at this time living on sufferance, because they have no ideals.

It is from the Greeks that ideals came ; it was the currents of their thoughts that crystallized in Plato, and it is from Plato that they have filtered and permeated Europe. It is this Platonic thirst for ideals, this attachment to things that do not pay, this is what keeps Europe going. This is what divides the people of Europe from the rest of the world, the conviction that they are still on a firm basis of Platonic ideals. They are vitalized, they are electrified by the hope of some ideals, a constant, never-ending current of ideals, each person setting up ideals for himself.

It once happened when two friends met, that one, with a Bible in his hand, asked the other, "Do you implicitly believe everything that is written in that book ?" The answer was, "Yes, I do," and "No, I don't." He saw the object with which the question was put—that he should agree with the other's preconceived ideas that every word in that book was divinely inspired, and, therefore that every word must be true. That was his ideal ; and he was perfectly right. But the ideal of the friend questioned was quite different ; he agreed to Divine inspiration running through the book, and so believed it all. But an opinion in such a case should be suggestive and not authoritative. The friends differed thus in the method of their conclusions, but they were

PLATO

both united in believing that there was an ideal. This has been done in the darkest centuries, and it is being done to-day. Both are right, because both have ideals, and those ideals have crystallized from Plato.

This ever-changing current of thought, guided by no fixed rule, hemmed in by no laws, is well exemplified by a saying of Blücher's to his men at Waterloo, when he saw them wavering at a charge against the enemy, "Do you want to live for ever?" cried he. Are we to live for ever with our fixed thoughts? No; it is the Platonic leaven that helps us along. We may be *apotelistic*, but we must be *music* too, for there are certain propelling forces that will never fail us, that will send a thrill of intense enjoyment through us, that will give us new ideals of life, and new ideals of thought, from the ever-flowing current which had its beginning with Plato.

CHAPTER II

IN the last chapter were characterized some of the special features of Plato and his Philosophy ; in this it is necessary to discuss some of the works of Plato, and especially such as speak of the criticism of Life. Plato, it is known, treated of two departments of thought ; the first of these dealt with Life in all its phases, and affecting every human problem of existence ; the second dealt with Cognition, or Thought, so to speak ; that is, How do we think, and how do we arrive at knowing things ?

His theory of Cognition is somewhat subtle and technical, and does not, perhaps, appeal to all as it should ; on the other hand, his criticisms of Life are really the thing which interests us most, as it is to us of everyday interest. Plato was a Greek, and he lived at a period of Greek history when that nation was in a state of high perfection ; Greek life, indeed, was the richest life men have ever led in history, being endowed with those high ideals without which no nation can ever rise to greatness. And it was from such surroundings, in the depths of which his whole

PLATO

life was lived, that he has handed down to us those observations which have held mankind through centuries, and which will be discussed as far as possible in these chapters. His observations went deeper into the everyday occurrences of life than those of any other writers have ever done, and they will be found to be simple to understand, though the form of these observations may sometimes appear to be somewhat misleading.

One of his works was the "Republic," and in this he gives us an idea of the State in which men and women are perfectly happy. In modern life the State is considered to be a very great institution, the object of its existence being to ensure the bodily salvation of this life; the second great need, the salvation of after-life being left for the Church to work out. Now, with the Greeks, the State was their Church as well; and the Greek idea was that all salvation was to be worked out here on this earth, and that it was the duty of the State to ensure that the greatest of happiness was reached by men and women. In the Republic, Plato delineates an ideal State in which men and women are in a very peculiar position, each in his or her way trying to reach an ideal. Men often say, For what purpose is all this? And the question is frequently asked, What is the use of the ideal State? Surely, they say, we cannot accept such an ideal State. What is the use of Plato putting down laws as guides to reach

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

the ideal of such a State? The ancients had their "guardians" of State, who were appointed to administer the State on lines leading to such ideals. With us such a thing is impossible. The tendency with savages is for men to want women to minister to their pleasures. Such a thought is necessarily revolting to our ideas, and it was also revolting to the Greeks. No Greek was allowed to have more than one wife, as he was a monogamist as we are, and monogamy is the direct outcome of an ideal. "Plato's Republic is purely ideal; he cultivates the gifts of imagination," it might be said, "and imagination can do no good to us in a practical everyday life; it does not teach us anything." On the contrary, far from being superfluous, it should be our guiding star in our problems of life, appealing to us as mothers and as fathers of families. Mothers should be appealed to as the trainers of the young, to pay the greatest heed they can to the teachings of this philosopher. To man, the writings of Plato come as guiding principles; they implant, or should do, the first thoughts of the ideal.

And here it is necessary to give an illustration, a very simple one. Suppose we have a practical man, who cares nothing for ideals. He wants to buy a garden and a house. How does he set about it? He goes to a house-agent, and says, "I want a house with a garden of ten acres." The price is told him; but he looks to material profit,

PLATO

and says, "No, I will give two-thirds of that, say, £2000." The bargain is struck, and then comes the question of seeing if he really has ten acres. Nothing can be more *terre à terre* than the whole transaction. Are these ten acres really ten acres? They measure it. How? By lines. Now consider that a line is a purely imaginary thing. Mathematically, it has length only but no breadth, and to our imagination such a thing does not exist. We have never seen such a thing nor can we imagine it. We really cannot get at the idea of a line. Nevertheless it is this ideal line which measures the extent of the ten acres, and ensures that the property bought is really what it is represented to be. This gives us a fair means of determining how the ideal State of Plato bears a relation to the real State.

There are, in all, three States to be considered : (i) the first State is the ideal ; (ii) the next State is not quite ideal, nor quite terrestrial, but is something between the two ; and this is the state which is governed by the *Laws* of Plato ; (iii) the third State is governed by reality. It is the second of the above states with which we are dealing, and with which the *Laws* of Plato are concerned. Such a state is the best for all practical purposes, as it affects every action of our lives. Everything we do and think must come down as if from an idealist. There is no such thing as a materialist. Man must descend from

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

the idealist. When a man wants to marry a woman, woman, and a particular woman, becomes his highest concept, his highest expression of the ideal. We are each of us Platonists born, we have each of us some ideal guiding the mind even in our most practical and materialist ideas.

Now as to the *Nόμοι*, the book of the Laws. This is not the compilation of a dreamer in the fifth dimension, far from it. The most unpractical ideas of Plato bear on practical problems of life; he touches on questions that come to us when we are quite alone; when we know that we have met the man or woman that will influence our whole life, when we have been witnessing, as it were, a good drama; he touches, indeed, on the essentials of life when, in fact, we have met with a problem we must decide. We say, "What shall we do with all that?" We see Americans, Parisians, Spaniards, each governed by separate ideals, which put the world before us in different aspects, and we say, "We don't want this or that type of humanity." But humanity is all a question of ideals, and it is before us too, though in a different aspect. It is there, and it is all to be followed, or to be condemned. There is no special erudition in Plato, nor will abstract philosophy be found in him; but his teaching is plain and full of simplicity, and yet at the same time it is full of wisdom.

It is the seventh book that is being dealt with

PLATO

now, and it is the first of the books of "The Laws" which ought to be read before the others. In reading it carefully it will be found that he treats there of education; it will at once show his whole attitude towards education. We have no end of laws on education; we have explicit rules to show us how to bring up our youth from the age of ten or twelve to eighteen or twenty. But where are our laws on primary education, that is, how to bring up a child from the age of one to ten? Our boys and girls of that age we leave to obscurity; they are left in the nursery in the care of women of lowly origin, of lowly education, who use their influence and form the character of future generations. And yet this period of a child's life is the most important, the rest is a mere logical sequence of what has gone before. There is a common saying that the man is what the child is. If we have a good idea of what the child has been in his earliest years, we can also tell what the man will be.

Plato goes a step further. He wants to educate the woman before a child is born; and his advice to the woman and mother is clear and simple. Be cheerful and active, move as much as possible, move violently, exercise your bodily strength, take air into you as much as you can. *A propos* of this, to what causes was due the greatness of the Spartans? It was due to their laws, not only for training the young, but also for training the

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

mothers. They had stringent laws to regulate the conduct of mothers long before a child was born; stringent laws for the development of girls, who had to go through a course of gymnastics to render them strong, yes, as strong as men. Plato says they over-did it, for they not only wrestled with men, but they even defended their country, they partook of the heaviest food so that they might attain to all the breadth of development that a woman can. And, after all, if we lose sight of exaggeration in Sparta, what do we come back to? We come back to the teachings and the principles of Plato.

In woman we have the riddle of creation, she is the incarnation of the race, the incarnation of the great riddle—the riddle of all riddles. We might think that Plato is illogical in saying that something comes out of nothing, but here we have the very life of all life. Let us develop the woman as best we can, for she is the point on which all depends, and we shall verily have that something coming out of nothing. Having done all we can for the development of the woman, the child arrives. There is to be no dress, or only a loose dress for the first three years; it must be constantly moved about, and allowed as much air and as much freedom as possible to the limbs; and while thus moved about, you must sing to it, and let it hear music with rhythmic movement. There must be no toys of your own selection, no

PLATO

toys from Whiteley's, made in Germany, which leave nothing to the child's imagination. The child must invent its own toys, a twig or a branch will be a toy to it, from which it will make giants and princesses and sorcerers ; but in no case influence the ideas of the child. All experience tells us that a child looks upon everything as a toy ; your books, your valued treasures about the house, are only toys to the child, and if you do not select for it, you will be the means of developing that imagination which goes to make true ideals in later life.

Let us now turn to our edition of Plato, that edition of Stephanus, universally adopted by scholars, and, according to his pagination, let us look up page 794, in the margin. He says exactly and precisely that toys given to a child is a psychological error, and that every child will invent his own.

And now let us come to the sixth year of a child's life. At this age he says that boys should be separated from girls, and the boys should be free from feminine influence. Here we must see what the great American nation teaches us. It is a well-known fact that in America boys and girls are educated together. What is it that we find as the result ; it kills American literature. True, for this there are also other causes. Thus they have no language of their own ; their language is the English language, and not their

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

own. Let us look to the history of other nations similarly situated. There is Belgium, which speaks and writes the French language ; there are the Swiss, who speak German, French, or Italian ; and what literature do these nations possess ? It may be said positively that no nation which has not a language of its own can possibly have a great literature. The quarry of every country must be its language, from which a man must sculpture out his thoughts in the marble, so to speak, of his own country.

Another result in America, in consequence of the intermingling of the sexes at school and college, and the teaching of men by women, has been the death of all romance. A boy after sixteen or seventeen years of age has seen too much of girls, and they begin to pall on him. The charm of life—the romance of life—is gone, and the girl does not care for the man. For this statement the author himself was the butt of about sixty criticisms ; he was said to be the most ignorant of men, a dastardly coward to make such assertions ; perhaps the Americans are too thin-skinned for criticism, yet it was just this little thing that was exposed by the Moseley Commission.

Now let us turn again to Plato, the same page as before, and we find him saying the same thing ; that girls must not be educated with boys ; it kills manly individuality, it kills the individuality

PLATO

of the girls ; they get bored with each other by too great familiarity, they know too soon all there is to be known of each other. And yet it must be said, in spite of all this, that there are Americans who agree that the mixture of sexes was the greatest of all mistakes in that country, as it renders man callous to the poetry, to the charm of womanhood ; and it is on this that the Moseley Commission put their foot down.

From the point of view of a man, an instance might be given of an American, who was certainly a good type of the results of the system. Frank W—— was about thirty years of age, and as handsome as a man could be, a specimen of the *jeunesse dorée*, and he had become utterly indifferent to all social life ; he had, in fact, used up all his emotions. It was said to him, “ Why don’t you go to that picnic, you will meet beautiful, accomplished girls there ? ” He said, “ Now, look here, friend, I am absolutely sick of it ; I have had too much of it.” And so it is ; it has never done that nation any good ; and the same thing is happening to-day with South Americans, in Chili, in Peru ; they are trying to put woman on the same level with man, but they cannot do it ; all history is against it. Plato again is our guide, and, turning to the same page as before, we find him saying that women and men must be educated separately. A man must learn manly occupations ; equitation, wrestling, shooting with arrows, and

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

games of all kinds ; a woman too has her occupations, she must be nimble, she must learn the arts, and philosophy, but it must be separate from men. These are the principles laid down, and we may go through history, and wherever we find man and woman have been thrown together, and brought up on the same lines, there we will always find something wrong.

Nelson, it is true, was a hero, but the greatest victory of the hero was not at Trafalgar, nor at Aboukir ; a greater victory was his love for Emma. She was not his wife, we would say only a mistress ; but there she was, he held her up as his ideal, he loved her, and his greatness was due to his love for that great and beautiful woman, who was the mother of his children, and his last words were for her. This shall remain for all time, this one great love which was an incentive to his great deeds. There is also the similar case of Pericles at the beautiful feet of Aspasia.

Leave boys and girls together from ten to eighteen years of age, and what will be the end ? All romance is gone, all spell is broken, and how can they have any drama in their lives ? A man and a woman then are really sick of each other, they are bored to death by each other's company ; and this is said by a Frenchman in a recent novel "*Eve Victorieuse*," and the French are versed in the art of love. The author speaks of an American lady married to a man who was intellectual,

PLATO

athletic, muscular, and yet she was bored to death in a short time. How can people like these have drama in their lives, when the woman is sick of it all at twenty years of age, and the man bored to death at twenty-five ?

And this, too, means death to all literature. Literature is not a mere amusement ; it is a great, a most important thing for a country. What would Hungary be without her literature ? There we have Petöfi and Arany, these men hold us together. What would Englishmen be without their Shakespeare ? And not Shakespeare alone, but Milton, Shelley, Keats, Byron. By England is meant all that ; great deeds may be forgotten and lost, but poets remain.

Now, it is for the producing of such as these that mothers should use their influence. The great error of our time is that we have no laws how to train children from one to ten years of age. No, said the Greeks and Plato, for these we must have the most stringent laws. There ought to be women appointed for controlling the education of such children, they must go from house to house, and see if the mothers are strong enough, if the nurses are fit for the control of their charges, if the games and play are properly organized ; for it is a serious thing, the proper development of a child ; and for such development, games, according to Plato, are the most serious thing.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Buecher, a political economist in Leipsic, wrote a wonderful and charming book, in which he speaks of rhythm and labour, that all work should be accompanied by music; that art preceded labour; that it was art first, and business or the shop after; or to put it in another way, we are artistic before we are "shopistic;" in fact, we want art, for we are made so; it is given us to promote our growth.

To a child everything is a game; every man a playmate; and everything he or she touches is a toy for the purpose of play. If we refer again to Plato, to the same page of the seventh book, it will be found that he warns us to be very careful that the games of children are regulated and watched, for they form the real character of the man. Now, sports are the greatest feature of England. One could not have been at Oxford and Cambridge and not noticed this fact. It is not the abuse of sport that is referred to; abuse will creep into anything. But enjoyed and indulged in, as it is in this country, it may be said that they go to form two-thirds of the British character—the real character of the nation which is formed by golf and football and cricket. As Plato says, give them games to form muscle, to exercise power of control, to give them joy of life. There is one point, however, against the English games—they are not sufficiently cheerful. Compare, for instance, the Greeks and their great

PLATO

ἀγῶνες; there they danced together, sang together, they had wrestling and athletic games together—all to music. Compare too Sparta, where everything was done in a public place, the ἀγωνισταὶ being practically in a semi-nude state, with music and rhythm accompanying, and all regulated by the State; nothing was left to the initiative of individuals, for fear that they might over-do things.

This is why Plato carries conviction, the laying down of stringent laws so as not to over-do things. Take the case of music in Hungary; and the author speaks as an old Hungarian. There is too much music in Hungary. The country is steeped in it; it is its narcotic. Every country has its narcotic; with one it is opium, with another hashish, with a third it is religious fanaticism. The Hungarians take it in music. They rise to it in the morning—there is never a *café* at lunch time but where there is music. They are serenaded with it, intoxicating melodies are heard all around; it is charming music, but one is almost paralyzed by it—it is saturation, over-saturation with music. It is, as Plato says, too much. He relates too of the sacrifices, dances, and ceremonials in Egypt, of young men from eight to eighteen, which were regulated by law. All songs in honour of a goddess were regulated by law; and if any one did anything against these laws, or sang a song contrary to what was laid down, he could be

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

called to account by any private person in an action for godlessness or impiety; he could be accused for singing a hymn which was not according to law.

Now, in Hungary they intoxicate you with their music; they go mad over it, with its rhythm and its cadence. These beautiful rhythms and cadences and melodies will be found taken from Hungarian music by Beethoven, Mozart, Brahms, any quantity of it. It makes one sad to think of this poor country flooded by all this music, ruined by it. If only there were laws to regulate it; but no, it is all *Sitte* or custom, as we would say, and it is custom with us which influences society. Plato is surely right, that *Sitte*, or custom, should be subject to laws; it should be so with us, and there is no doubt it will be in time, when we shall have our laws, like the Greeks, to regulate future generations from childhood, and even before the children are born.

Now, it would be well to consider another point. With the Greeks any man doing business was looked upon as contemptible, and here in England it is the same. Those who make money by manufacturing shoes, coats, and trousers are ignored, they are looked down upon; business is shameful *kremastistikon*; socially, in this country, this class does not exist. They may have made last week 10,000 dollars, but humanity says they are not in it. This class is very rich, but often also

PLATO

fearfully unhappy. Carnegies are not necessarily happy men, for money is not the real point in life. It remains, indeed, true that we are, all of us, at heart Platonists. But in this sense the man who only cares for acquiring money has chosen ideals which cannot lead him to those paths where he can say, "I am happy." Let us look at it from another point of view. It may be said that the Greeks were more religious than we are, and we find Plato talking of the immortality of the soul, and of a future existence. Take Aristotle, the Stoics, or the Neo-Stoics, with them all there was the same problem to work out, of a future existence ; and yet Plato and the Greeks maintained that we should be happy here ; that life is not matter ; life is in your belief, and in your firm grasp of what we call ideas. If it is not there, it is nowhere. There are people who have thought that Plato was all mere bosh ; but from an historical standpoint his writings are marvellous, and have engrossed all ages. At Byzantium, a thousand years ago, Phothius descended on Plato. In the fifteenth century, the ladies of Florence sat and listened to Marsilius Ficinus ; and to-day we are listening once more to the self-same topic. Whether we are convinced or not, there is something in the whole matter, something however small, a mere *crepuscule* of thought, the forerunner of the rising sun ; perhaps that sun has not risen yet, but it may rise. We may turn

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

round and say, "Master, what you say is so far from reality, it may be mere dreams." Still they are ideals without which we cannot live, as they are the essence of existence, which is the outcome of ideas. The *crepuscule* must indeed precede the day.

Now, Plato has declared that nobody shall come to the teaching of his Philosophy without a previous knowledge of geometry. Do we, then, know what an asymptote is? Draw a straight line on the blackboard and then another curved line, and produce them ever so far, so that they go on approaching each other, but yet never meeting each other. This is the idea we get from Plato and his philosophy. It is like the asymptotes, we go on and on, getting nearer and nearer the ideal, but never touch. There are moments, from time to time, when we think we have touched. There are moments, for instance, when beauty is realized; when we think a certain woman is perfectly beautiful, and our full conception of beauty is realized in just that woman. Some one asked François Liszt if he had ever seen an absolutely beautiful woman. His answer was "Yes, twice only, but then she lasted only a few months."

Is it not necessary for us to-day to try and do something for the education of our children from one to ten years of age? Let every mother try to realize something of Plato, and if she reads him

PLATO

and finds a passage which to her appears an asymptote, let her not say I can never reach that, but rather that after all it is my duty to try and do something towards reaching it. If Raphael the painter had been asked which was his greatest work, he would have said the pictures I never painted are infinitely greater than those I have painted. And so with Mozart, who said that the music he had heard within him unexpressed was grander than any he had composed. So they go on higher and higher to the highest of ideals, but they never reach it. And so, if only ten or fifteen women in London try to realize these teachings and where they lead to, and try to bring up children on those lines, others would do the same. The force of example is strong in England, where the middle class tries to imitate the upper class, whose influence cannot fail to benefit the entire nation. This is what makes Plato the greatest of all teachers, he comes to you a mother, a sister, to me a man of business, a brother, and he shows us how to raise, to elevate ourselves, and others through us.

Let us take the story of Socrates and the cobbler; "My friend," said the sage, "and how is business going?" and so he carried him along from shoes to leather, to nails and every other article of his trade, little by little, until he raised the man's estimation of his calling; a new wave was coming into the man, and he exclaimed, "I

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

see much more in my trade than I ever saw before." "Why," said Socrates, "I did not speak of anything higher than your trade."

Now let us come back again to our volume of Plato, p. 794, seventh book, and consider another point to which he draws attention. "What nonsense is this," says he, "that we practice our right hand and not our left as well; in educating the young we never practice both hands equally; we make ourselves lame in our hands, and not in our feet." There is a well-known saying that our intellect comes from our brain; but that the brain is really the seat of our intellect has never been proved. After all the elaborate writings of physiologists and phrenologists here and abroad, who tried to prove that such was the case, the problem is still unsolved. Whether that semi-fluid mass in our heads is, or is not, the seat of our intellect, this much is certain that something is there; and to get perfect action for the brain and the heart, we must work the left as much as the right arm. The left arm would react on some part of the brain, and both arms would develop both sides of the brain equally. Now all this is most suggestive, and it is for mothers to take the matter into consideration, and to see if by their influence they can do something for the childhood of their country by the teachings we have here. Many a child with a weak heart might gain something, but whether it reacts on

PLATO

the brain as the seat of intellect remains to be seen.

In reading Plato it will be found that, whatever subject he deals with, he goes straight to the principle. With him, whether it be in the Republic or the *Nóμοι*, or any other of his works, it is the *Oὐσία*, the essence, or the principle of the thing which he attacks. With music, dances, sex, education, he goes straight to the principle ; and he did infinitely more than what we are doing now. We leave music entirely alone, and no country in Europe legislates about it. Modern music is thus the bane of modern life, and instead of steadily improving, as it should, it is degenerating. A man would be laughed at if he went to an M.P. and asked him to propose a bill in Parliament to regulate music ; and yet how can we attain to the best unless we educate our men and our women by proper laws ? And education is the most important branch of all politics, for never can a State become great without education.

Let us see what Abbé Galiani has to say on the subject. He was a most gifted man, who lived in France in the eighteenth century, and in his *Correspondance* there are letters written to all the grand ladies of the time. He had a peculiar power of shedding new light on various subjects, and ladies asked him all sorts of questions. In one of these letters, when Mme. D'Epinay, referring to Athens, Sparta, and the Laws of Plato,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

asks him whether we could apply these laws to our modern states, "No," said he, "they were only laws of education; with us it is only a question of legislation." There is no doubt that the upper classes must use their influence to make things different. The more we strive to become like these states, the better for our country. There is no reason why we should not do now what the ancients did; and in the future, through women, we might bring back those times when education was the most important part of politics; when women, by moulding the character of the children in their earlier years, really were instrumental in moulding the character of the State. Our women might then truly say with the mother of the Gracchi, "I have no treasure and no gems. My gems are my sons Caius and Tiberius."

All this may not be realized at once; indeed, it may not be realized at any time. But it is for women to be up and be doing, and to make their beginning with the study of Plato. Distance now does not count, with our telegraphs and telephones, railways and motor-cars. Paris and Berlin and Vienna are nearer to us now than Sparta was to Athens. Why should we not make of Germany, France, England, a new Athens, and by our influence, little by little, introduce those teachings of Plato which will bring us moderns to a state infinitely superior to anything we have ever had, when men will be men, and

PLATO

women, women ; when there will be a new Periclean period, and new thoughts and new progress ? A new Athens can be made only by new women ; by women who are really women, and who will form a man before he is ten years of age, and before Law and Church and anything else can step in. These pages of the seventh book of Plato are the most important for forming such new ideas, which will bring new intellectual pleasures, and will thus add considerably to the importance of this great country.

CHAPTER III

We now come to the consideration of another part of the seventh book of Plato, which is of intense interest to us modern men and women, though it may be somewhat difficult for people obstructed with their preconceived ideas, and stuffed with too much book-learning, to assimilate the problems dealt with.

In the thirteenth chapter of this book it is stated that people ought to have common meals. Now, this is most difficult for people in modern times to realize, and it will at once be said that that cannot apply to modern circumstances in the least, nor to the conditions of our present life. But it is known that this question of common meals has actually come, in a way, into American life. And it has come about in America through various causes, chiefly through lack of servants. It is not necessary now to discuss the servant question, but it may be said that, to obviate this difficulty, people live, not in flats, but in blocks of houses, a series of houses made up of twenty or twenty-five of them in one block; and in the underground rooms there will live a caterer, who will cater for the

PLATO

vast number of families in the block, and provide for them all by one cuisine. It is not meant by that that they sit for their meals in one and the same room. Now, this is a caricature of the home life, the same as the boarding-house system is a caricature of the much-vaunted British home life ; similar institutions in France are called *pensions*, or living *en pension*, as the French say. These boarding-houses are the nearest approach there is in modern times to the common meals of the ancients, a very caricature of what Plato lays down in his book ; and with the twelve thousand boarding-houses in London, and the vast area of "blocks" in America, it is the most drastic refutation of our pretended love for the home.

Plato insists that we should eat together, and that this eating together educates the manners. Boys and girls should therefore be educated in eating and drinking together ; in short, in table manners. It was this great guiding idea which the Spartans and the Cretans long ago realized ; but with us to-day it is certainly only a caricature. But there is the guiding ideal about it all to which we might gradually aspire ; not only might it improve our table manners, but our cuisine as well, for, as the Americans truly say, our modern cookery is manslaughter in the second degree.

In Greek life there was a series of continuous banquets. No Spartan was allowed to eat at home, but they had their great meal in common ; and if

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

we followed the same custom our cuisine would be better and our table manners would be better. *À propos* of table manners, an instance might be given of a banquet, at which the author was present, at Bremen, which was somewhat of a caricature of the Greek banquets. It lasted from four to eight o'clock, a most uncomfortable hour to begin, it must be agreed. The Germans ate, as Germans do, and their powers in this direction can only be expressed by geometrical figures raised to the second and third powers. All through the repast they had but one knife and fork to each person. Now, this was not quite right. We do need, then, to study Plato and to act on his advice, that boys ought to learn table manners, how to eat and how to drink; not only to sit together, but to be educated in the proper manner of eating and drinking.

Plato refers to another point, and a most important one, and that is, the proper regulation of sleep. It is a very curious point, which perhaps with our preconceived ideas of modern times we may find difficult to understand, and will say that there is a great difference between the life led by the Greeks and by ourselves. Plato says that people make the greatest mistake possible in sleeping too long. We have a common saying that six hours is sufficiently long for elderly people to sleep, seven or eight hours for younger people, and up to ten or twelve hours for the child. Now,

PLATO

Plato does not believe in all that. He says five or six hours is quite sufficient for anybody, and that during these restricted hours of sleep a public person ought to get up two or three times during the night to guard against evil-doers whom the darkness might hide; he would thus get to the mind or heart of things; and the free man ought to get up and go about his house to see if his servants are asleep, and if everything about the house is in order.

Plato says we sleep too much; and anything above this limit of his is too much. All countries go to excess in some matter; one country eats too much, another drinks too much, a third has too much music. We sleep too much. With the Greeks there was a reward for the boy who regulated his sleep; he was allowed privileges and special exemptions not accorded to other boys. All that seems to us in northern lands somewhat strange—how if five or six hours of sleep is sufficient for a man of forty or fifty, it should also be sufficient for a younger man of twenty or thirty. Perhaps we must attribute it to the purer air of Greece, its lighter food. It might be possible there, though not so feasible in our more northern climate. But we are given by Plato the general principle, and we might take this general principle as our ideal in this matter. That we do sleep too much there would seem to be not a shadow of doubt. People from twenty-five to forty years of

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

age sleep too much. There is an instance of Italy. What Italian is there who does not take his regular siesta in the day? Such a man, if he existed, would not be considered a "gentleman." In Spain they sleep two-thirds of their time. In France, that most energetic of countries, they are in bed by ten o'clock and up by five in the morning. If we go into any provincial town we will see the shops open at seven in the morning. If we ask why they open their shops at this hour, and if they ever get a customer then? "I may not get a customer," is the answer, "but still, I must open the shop." It will be noticed that the more south one goes, and the more eastward from Europe, the more the people sleep; and all this is decidedly anti-Platonic.

Plato is very distinct on the point in his Laws, in his Republic, and also in his incidental remarks in his Dialogues. Though we may not be able to do in our northern climate with as little sleep as they did in Greece, still, we would do well to consider the Greek side of life, and see where the difference comes in. That life was so much more intense, so much richer and fuller than ours, that we are bound to pause and consider whether a man like Plato, whose experience went so far, would lay down such a law unless it were absolutely necessary to the strenuous life around him. Let us take Plato on one or two other subjects, on temperance and on teetotalism. He

PLATO

completely condemns them. When, therefore, such a rich and experienced nation, living the intensest of life, condemns a thing, we have good *prima facie* reason for thinking our preconceived notions on such a question must be totally wrong.

Perhaps it will be said that we are going too far in such questions on sleeping and eating and drinking. We to-day go too far in the worship of woman ; the Greeks, perhaps, went too far in the worship of man. There is at the back of all this an infinity of infinitude that we cannot reach. There is no end to anything. There is no Plato, no Aristotle, and no other thinker in this world who will exhaust everything. When Plato says something is wrong, it may be taken for certain that he had some very good reason for saying so. His experience was gained from a variety of types, from Syracuse, from Corinth, from Thebes, from Sparta and Athens—all types totally differing from each other ; and we may in our mind still have a *prima facie* case against him and say, perhaps he isn't right. But let us think of it all before we come to such a conclusion ; let us think of the question of sleep.

Now let us notice another argument. The mere vulgar, ordinary man—a man quite commonplace—such as the Greeks would call absolutely “Philistine,” who, in the day, does not use his imagination, will dream at night ; he always has dreams night after night, and will relate wonderful

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

dreams. It is the instinct of nations to indulge in play. In England it is horse-racing ; in Austria it is lottery. A man in Austria will dream of, say, the number thirteen or seventeen, or a poplar, or a white horse—they have whole books for the interpretation of dreams—and he will at once, by the supposed light of his dream in which he has faith, go and put his money down on his particular number, fully believing that the turn of a wheel will bring him in a large fortune. All nations have their excitements, and the Austrian has it in his lottery. But men of higher intelligence never dream, or dream very little. They are working their imagination all day long with pictures, drama, philosophy ; and when they go to sleep, they are tired, their imagination rests, and their sleep is dreamless. Lessing, Goethe, Shelley, never dreamt, or dreamt the most commonplace things. With men who do not use their imagination in the daytime, it is active when they are sleeping, and so it produces dreams. And so it is if we take the later years of a highly imaginative man—a poet, for instance, in the evening of his life ; he has worked his imagination out in the earlier years of his life, and so his later works are devoid of it, and become dry, veritable dry-as-dust. This is the case with Goethe ; but, perhaps, one exception should be mentioned, the present great poet of England, Swinburne, who remains as fresh as he was in his earlier years.

PLATO

The Greeks were so active with their intelligence that they did not dream. We seldom hear of a man of ancient Greece going to the Greek oracles at Delphi or Dodona, and saying, "I have had such and such a dream; will you please explain?" As a rule, this is not the case. The Greeks, being intensely intelligent, dreamt very little. The whole economy of their life was so totally different from ours that Plato's remarks on sleep come to us as of a most profound character; of a deeper significance than mere medical advice. They indicate the result of experience gained from his surroundings of totally different types of life, an experience of a life spent among so great a mixture of men that his remarks must be taken as absolutely convincing.

We now come back to children, and how to educate them when they reach their tenth year; and here, again, we must look up the thirteenth chapter of the seventh book of Plato. They were not to be taught reading and writing until they reached that year. This advice the author has followed in the case of his own child, who was not allowed to read or write before she was ten (her father had read too much), as he thought that Plato was infinitely wiser than he could ever be, because that man lived in a country where there was the possibility and chance of seeing things in infinitely greater variety and aspects than could possibly fall to his lot.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

In America there are too many colleges, and too much education in early life ; the average Americans are, in fact, over-educated. The author has been there long enough to know and to say that in America all Americans are alike ; they are all of one type. And it is this lack of type among them that has been the cause of their greatness in one aspect, and also of their weakness. It is a great homogeneous nation, where one sees a great number, all of one kind; but only a number. It is different in London and Paris, where so many types are met with, so many shades and varieties of humanity all differing from each other, which one never sees in a very homogeneous country. The London 'bus conductors and drivers are a type of the most intelligent people of the lower classes in this country, for the reason that they see and deal with so many different types of people in their daily work. And so with the Greek cities, with Thebes, Corinth, Athens, Megara. In a small compass, in a very little circumscribed country, they had the whole of humanity, so to speak. In Europe, too, there are many diversities of types if we could travel and see for ourselves ; but how many travel thus, or could speak the various languages without which we could not reach the heart of the people ? In Greece there was but one language, and all spoke that language ; whether from Acarnania or Attica or Thrace—all spoke the one language, however

PLATO

the people might differ in type, and in spite of what was considered good in Megara being considered a crime in another city.

When a deep-thinking man like Plato lays it down that no child—and a child is a very fertile germ—should learn reading and writing before it is ten, we must be very much convinced; and a student of philosophy would think he was absolutely right. He then proceeds to say that from ten to thirteen a child should be taught reading and writing only; and at thirteen he should be able to read and write anything. With the Greek and our modern alphabets of twenty-two to twenty-six letters this ought to be an easy thing to do. Let us take a side glance at nations that have overdone this sort of thing, the Chinese and the Japanese. The Chinese have five thousand different signs and six hundred different sounds just for ordinary everyday purposes. For literary purposes they have about ten thousand; while the full number of signs in Chinese literature may be put down at fifty thousand. The labour and time required to learn these sounds and signs would be immense; indeed, it would take any ordinary man from six to ten years of his receptive time in learning them—a sheer waste of youth and the springtime of learning in acquiring an abominable method. With the Greeks it was the analytical method they learnt from the Phœnicians, and our own alphabets are based on

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

that learning ; and the teaching of reading and writing to children is thus made easy. Well, to come back to the child. During these three years, from ten to thirteen, he is not to be allowed to learn poetry or prose ; neither geography nor history—in fact, nothing else but to be able to read and write. Let us compare this with our own modern countries. Let us take the author's own country, Hungary, and imagine the misery the youth are subjected to from the age of ten to thirteen. They had to go to the Gymnasia, where they learnt Latin, Greek, geography, history, physics, chemistry, and a host of other subjects besides, not only the *pourquoi des choses*, *mais le pourquoi du pourquoi*, all between the ages of ten and thirteen ; every day of the week regularly from four to six hours at school, excepting on Thursdays and Saturdays, when the afternoons were free. We come back to Plato, and he says, "you must not learn anything ;" and this from a Greek who had the most fanatical interest in everything, one of the most inquisitive nations the world has ever had. What is the consequence ? Why, the Government here, so enamoured of the Hungarian system, actually sent a lady to report on it, and she returned with a glowing, triumphant report of what she had seen. The author was then asked by the Government to give his opinion. He addressed an inquiry : " Am I supposed to give an official report, or to

PLATO

say just what is in my mind ? ” The answer was that he was to say just what was in his mind—what he really thought about it. The answer was written back with a motto from the seventh book of Plato at the head of it, that a child from ten to thirteen ought to learn nothing, except to read and to write.

We may think our system is a wise one, and Plato a fool ; but we should ponder over the other alternative—whether Plato was not profoundly right. The Hungarian system is too much ; all Hungarian young men nowadays are top-heavy. They have a rich, sonorous language which lends itself to rhetoric ; they are good, brilliant talkers. A Hungarian will talk of Icelandic institutions, of Norwegian troubles ; he will discuss Shakespeare, as few in this country can, *c'est pour se sauver*. But there is nothing more in it ; it is all talk ; and all because they would not follow the advice of the great sage. So in France, in the Paris *Lycée*, where they are taught to write erudite essays, a boy was told to imagine himself Cæsar, and to deliver a discourse. The boy was proud, and so was his father. But can we imagine a boy of twelve trying to be Cæsar, and addressing the Senate of Rome ! He tried to be brilliant, to be learned ; but all this was very amusing and so absurd that it was impossible to witness the thing without laughing for hours. His father was angry at the laugh, but all the author

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

could say was, *pardonnez moi*. All this is not education.

In England it is different. Here the Eton and Harrow boy is not overburdened with studies, and it is a very right thing it should be so. The author has had to teach thousands of young men in this country, and he can say that the majority of them knew precious little. He once asked a young man, Who was Herbert Spencer? Who was Goethe? He did not know; but he could speak French very well. This is a very good thing. They are manly, they are virile, and all that a young fellow should be at that age. This is more Platonic. Let not the young men of this country imitate the Germans. The boys at Eton and Harrow know quite enough, but they might know a little more geography; one does not like to be told that Lisbon is the capital of Spain. This is going a little too far; but all the same, they have more grit in them than if they had been taught to discourse as Cæsar.

All this is said not simply because Plato says it, but because Plato says it with the experience of a great and experienced nation behind him. We have in Europe more types than the Greeks had, where there was only one language; even in this empire of England the types are numberless, and yet how many have travelled and studied them, and what impressions have they brought back? There is no doubt that when one travels

PLATO

at the age of thirty or forty, the impressions left on the mind are not great ; it is in childhood that they are vivid. The kodak of the mind has then lost its power of taking impressions ; the time of impressions is over. The remarks of Plato regarding education from ten to thirteen have more than *prima facie* force. He is more than right, absolutely right, that we must start with right principles, and that our impressions, when young, are the only impressions which remain.

Now let us see how Plato thinks a child from thirteen to sixteen is to be taught. He must read the poets. He meant something very different from what we mean by poets. To the Greek, a book of poems was a Bible, a text-book of science and of amusement combined in one. Homer, for instance, was a veritable *Encyclopædia Britannica*, infinitely superior to it, as it combined knowledge, science, geography, and religion. A thousand years later the Greeks had Strabo, of Amasia, their geographer, and his town is still proud of having been his birthplace. He quotes Homer as we would a member of the Geographical Society, and he puts it all down as absolute truth. We think poetry is one thing, science another ; but he found both in Homer. There is a Frenchman, M. Victor Bérard, and he determined to take Homer *au pied de la lettre*. He said, "I will go from Greece to Troy, from Troy to Crete, to Sicily, to Gibraltar, and put myself in his place

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

so as to test Homer;" and when he came to a place he tried to identify it according to the descriptions given by Homer as with a Baedeker. He had no preconceived ideas, so he wrote a beautiful book. With Ulysses he came to the island of Calypso (that may be only a figure of poetry, but the locality where Calypso was may have been real), and there he tried to find a place answering to Homer's description, and he did find it completely true in every detail. Here was Homer in real form; and it shows us that Strabo was right, and that Homer was right. Let us, therefore, give Homer to our young men, not only as a book of poetry, but as a text-book of science, as a text-book of religion. The author had to read law for some time with an old lawyer, as dry-as-dust as possible; who could see nothing in Homer, or in poetry of any description. He read him the *Odyssey*, but the old man talked against it at first. As the reading progressed, and it came to the meeting of Ulysses and his wife, the old lawyer was absolutely dissolved in tears, but he said, *Die ganze Geschichte ist Unsinn.* This is Homer, and we can imagine what a nation must be which has such an immense advantage in having such a book of education.

This country has its Shakespeare, but Homer is greater than Shakespeare, though there are some qualities in Shakespeare which are superior to anything the Greeks have written. But any

PLATO

country which has such a book as Shakespeare is indeed fortunate ; and that this book, brimful of knowledge of birds, herbs, botany, etc., should be the work of one man, considering the times he lived in, is amazing. If the Greeks considered Homer as the chief pabulum of education for their children, surely here we have Shakespeare as the book, with its multiplicity of knowledge, to instruct our boys and girls with. If Homer be scientific, philosophic, and poetical combined, here we have the same thing in Shakespeare ; then why should we not do what the Greeks did, and give it to our children to read from beginning to end, and to study it ? It is sad to think that every foreigner of education, even to the Montenegrin and the Roumanian, has read him more and understands him better than the English have done. How many English can say that they have read all the plays of Shakespeare, and how many plays have they seen on the stage ? Perhaps two or three. Why not accept Plato, and say, if our boys require educating, we must give them Shakespeare ? Homer is so artistic, in spite of his simplicity ; parts of him are so different, so foreign, to our own modern atmosphere of teaching, that only his tales should be taken for the education of modern boys of thirteen to sixteen.

Though Plato lays down the reading of poets, he is somewhat severe on poets, as a rule, and hates tragedies. Let us consider the drama in

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

England. The real drama is practically unknown here, and is far from playing the *rôle* it ought to play in a great country. The various dramas seen are, so to speak, wooden, and no dramas at all, and yet England can boast of having had some of the greatest dramatic writers of modern times. Plato's advice is to read other poets as well. In the schools of England, at Harrow and Eton, they read poets ; yes, but they are only encouraged to do so. Plato makes it a matter of law ; a boy is bound to learn a poet by heart. Aristotle said that poetry is infinitely more suggestive of great things than history ; it is the great educative force. But the English are afraid that if they teach their boys poetry they will become romancers. It is nothing of the kind. Goethe says that of all our faculties the imagination is the most valuable ; and we may be sure that that nation is the greatest whose imagination is best cultivated. What made such men as Newton, Stephenson, Walter Scott great ? It was their power of imagination. Imagination in one went into science, in another into railways, in the third into literature ; but it is all one and the same thing.

We may take it as an absolute truth that where there are no great poets in a country, there are no inventions. In Canada, for instance, in South Africa, young and strenuous colonies, where are the inventions ? Whilst in "effete" England, because Englishmen still have imagination, there

PLATO

are produced not only the "Ode to the Skylark," but also machinery for silk; such great men appear as Sir W. Rowan Hamilton, the mathematician; Darwin and Huxley; there are new vistas continually opening of biology or railways or machinery. Where there are no great poets, there are no great inventors.

Now, the invention of wireless telegraphy may be considered almost superhuman. It comes from Italy, and Italian literature has assumed an entirely new *façon*; a wave of imagination has swept over New Italy, where there is a rush of inventive genius. And why? Because they have brought their imagination into play, and this can be verified if we read the new Italian novels. It is really a new country with a new history. It was ten years ago the author was giving a series of lectures at Cambridge, when he predicted that the greatest modern inventions in the near future would come from Italy, and five years after came Marconi with his wireless telegraphy. A friend of his who had ridiculed him sent him a letter of apology; a nice little *cadeau* accompanied the letter, begging his pardon. We now see the depth of Plato's remarks; give them Homer and Sophocles and Pindar; let our children read them and learn them thoroughly, for where there is much power of imagination in a nation, there will also be found greatness. It is necessary to organize and crystallize that great power of imagination in our

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

children. In Hungary, too, the imagination is much cultivated, and the outcome of it is also inventions. The great discovery in France of radium was not by a Frenchman, but by the wife of a Frenchman, a Polish woman, Mme. Curé, her husband only assisting her ; and the Poles are a highly imaginative people. We cannot expect much from the French in the way of inventions ; perhaps we may give them the credit of the motor-car. Some of us think it a dangerous thing, but it is useful. The Germans, again, have cultivated the imagination of the people very much. A man in Germany who does not cultivate the poets does not count. For a man not to know his Lessing, Schiller, and Goethe is considered a disgrace, a personal insult. They have, in addition to this, a great love for music. And with all this imaginative force some startling things have been done by them. They discovered the Röntgen rays, that startling discovery under which we can see the live body under operation, and which is destined to revolutionize the medicine of the future. We may go far for causes, but we will find that it is all in connection with the cultivation of the imagination. That was the great disappointment in Napoleon's career. He wanted some great inventor, some great poet in his time, and that was his cause of complaint regarding Châteaubriand, that he wrote no great poetry. And it is true that if we stifle imagination nothing comes of it ;

PLATO

and Plato's advice to study poetry, to cultivate imagination before anything else, has long been found to be absolutely sound.

In America every one writes poetry ; poems and ditties are to be found in every magazine, every newspaper one takes up ; but of poetry, true poetry, there is none in it. This is one of the greatest of their mistakes, the want of proper cultivation of the imagination ; and so important is this to a nation that we never can exaggerate its force. In England such things are not thought of, but are left to chance. The English say it is not needful for a boy to know poetry ; he must know something of arithmetic, something of astronomy. Plato does not advise us to study these, though he puts it negatively, and says "don't overburden the children with them ;" it is the cultivation of the imagination which is of the first importance.

Now we come to another important subject, that of music. On the Continent and here it is left entirely to the whims of the people. We will have a young lady to teach children music at, say, sixpence an hour, or, if we wish to be fashionable, at ten shillings an hour ; but that is enough, a noise is made, and we feel we have done our duty. To take the matter seriously, the idea does not exist. Now, Plato and the Greeks applied to music what they did to theology. Far from leaving it to our own sweet will, they said that

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

the legislator must regulate it ; it was the legislator who was to decide whether a boy should learn the flute, or the oboe, or the cithara ; whether the songs to be sung were to be the Boeotian melodies, or those from Asia Minor, or those from Phrygia.

And so with dancing. That rhythm of movement becomes in some countries, for want of regulation, a mere melancholy scrubbing of floors, while in others it resembles a funeral procession of a lugubrious order. The Greeks, however, divided it into two classes ; the light, frolicsome dance, *Emmeleia*, and the *Pyrrhic*, or war dance ; each expressed by its special movements. They despised a man who could not dance, while to-day most men of twenty or twenty-five are ashamed of dancing ; they think it is not manly. To the Greeks it was the chief psychological factor of education. By the rhythm of a dance we can tell a nation. In some nations it is the *adagio*, as in Orientals ; in others, the *legato*, the *staccato*, or the *allegro*. It comes out in their natures. Take Spain, a country which is decadent now, and all its glory gone ; but it would not be wrong to predict a great future for this nation, a nation that can throw itself into the most rhythmic and beautiful movements of dancing. The Spanish dancing is, indeed, most graceful and perfectly beautiful.

Plato says that harmony in body means harmony in soul. In modern times those things

PLATO

are quite separate. To the Greeks it was a truth, and we will find out, if we care to investigate, that such nations, in which dancing has been regulated and made to be a service to humanity, will come to a head, and will do something great; while, on the other hand, where there is something *staccato*, something we cannot quite swallow, there we will find not quite the *thing*, not the rhythm, not the *elan* in the dance. In Hungary they dance well. Suppose Plato were to see them, what would he say? The man goes through graceful capers, while the woman sways from right to left, as if sometimes hesitating, sometimes yielding; the man becomes quite wild as passion sways him. It is a poem in action. Plato would say this is excessive; this nation must be lazy; so bored by life are they that they go into a hysteria of amusement. That is why the Spaniards have bull-fights; after their lazy existence it is strong pepper they want. And so, too, the Thracians, who also liked this sort of thing, were lazy and excessively fond of pleasures. In England, where the people are excessively active all day, they take their pleasures seriously. "Oh, come to the music-hall," says a man, after his day's work. This is tame in comparison with what we have in Hungary and Spain; it is like lemonade to a bottle of champagne, with anodyne jokes, which are no jokes at all; but the Englishman is so intensely active

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

all day that, in the evening, any joke does for him. Not so in countries where they do nothing ; there they need cayenne to their pleasures. Dancing, it must be admitted, is a finer palmistry than the reading of our hands. Show us the dance of a nation, and we will tell you the future of that nation. We ought to see to it, then, that our youth dance, and they should be proud to dance well. We may think that our modern times are not fit for such things, but we have the views of Plato, and we have seen the experiences of nations, and we must be left to ponder it all over.

One more point. Plato says children should be educated in being witty. The Greeks were not humorous, as we understand the term humour in modern times. They were witty. Modern humour, such as American or English or Irish humour, was entirely unknown to them. French humour is Rabelaisque ; German humour has been defined as “laughing in the midst of tears.” This definition is right. Humour is the outcome of the wholesale mendacity of our times ; our society abounds in false positions ; and where the contrast between what is and what is said to be is strongest, there humour is rankest. There is little humour in France ; Frenchmen have, in fact, no sense of English humour. We may all remember the well-known remark of Mark Twain when he saw the announcement of his death in a newspaper.

PLATO

He wrote off to the editor: "Sir, the report of my death is grossly exaggerated." To this a Frenchman would shrug his shoulders, and say *et puis?* he does not understand it at all. To him everything is "*net.*" In such a country humour is impossible. In Greece, too, everything was absolutely net—he was either a slave, or a mercenary, or a freeman—no false positions, but nevertheless the Greeks were wonderfully witty; and Plato says that this form of wit ought to be taught the boys when they are fifteen or sixteen years of age. The method of teaching in England is grave; with them it was necessary that the young should see the comical side of things, for, they said, if they do not know the funny things, they will never learn to be serious. So it should be in this country, as Plato said, "Humour should be left to slaves and hired mercenaries." A humorous woman is like a painted man. But the real, comical side of things must be learnt. Tell the boy what is really funny; he cannot know what is serious without knowing what is funny.

And lastly, let us anticipate by a few words what we are going to discuss in the next chapter—that is, the drama. The English are sound in everything; sound in politics, sound in religion; and soundness brings dramas. Take the Italians who were, until recently, absolutely morbid; nor had they any dramas. No sound life, and no

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

dramas in them, is the rule of nations ; the very life assets, in fact, of a nation is the drama. Calderon and Lope de Vega were the Spanish dramatists in the golden age of Spain ; and here we see that drama and soundness go together. We shall see in our next chapter what Plato has to say on this subject.

CHAPTER IV

IN the previous chapters several points connected with the seventh book of Plato have been treated ; and there are several other points remaining which are just as interesting as they are important. But before we take up the important questions, let us settle what at first seems a trivial and less important one, the question, for instance, of hunting.

Now let us see what Plato has to say about hunting. At the present day there are plenty of people who worry themselves and are eager to put down cruelty to animals ; they do not think of cruelty to men and women, but to dear animals ; *they* must not be badly treated. Plato would appear to us to go very much further than this, for he forbids—absolutely forbids—the sport of fishing. He says that any man or boy who is allowed to indulge in fishing will naturally become inured to a sort of cruelty ; and cruelty does not excite manly vigour, but makes a coward of a man. It is cruelty to the defenceless fish to throw a hook out while sitting quietly on the bank, and then to tear him to pieces. It sounds awfully cruel when one thinks of it calmly. Perhaps the

THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals never thought of fishing in that light : the cruelty to animals which are wholly innocent of any intent to harm. Now, hunting the quadruped, the lion and the tiger, is a very different thing ; and this, Plato says, ought to be cultivated, for in this there is risk, and risk brings out a man's courage and endurance. In this he must be brave, have a good eye, and, perhaps, be a good horseman besides.

Plato would seem to be quite right, for in fishing there is absolutely nothing of courage, but patience only is required. A man will go to a river, and will sit and hold his line for two and three hours at a time without moving, until he catches a fish. Patience is said to be a virtue ; but it will be found that such a man, though patient in fishing, is the most impatient of men. Such a man the author once met, an enthusiastic angler, at Rouen. He was most patient when angling, and thus indulging his sense of cruelty on the fish ; but in ordinary society he was the most impatient of men, because he dare not practise his cruelties on men and women ; and in his heart of hearts he was the most cruel of men.

Now, our ideas of sport must be entirely reconstructed by Plato's remarks. It is like everything else Plato says, and his remarks on sport are worth considering. He has told us what he thinks about fishing, but he says nothing against

PLATO

the hunting of wild animals. The Assyrians, we know, were a great nation, and they were mighty hunters, and the name of Nimrod has grown into a proverb ; they went in for the hunting of lions, and we see the chase depicted over and over again in their sculptures. This necessitated the exercising of their courage, endurance, and prowess, and it was the exercise of these manly powers that made them a great nation. Of all this Plato approves thoroughly ; but fishing was an unnecessary thing ; the hunting of fish, as he calls it, was to him abominable. And this view, coming from a man like Plato, is worthy of our consideration.

And now let us continue what we anticipated in the last chapter ; let us take up the question of the drama, and see what Plato has to say on this subject. There are only a few lines about the drama in his seventh book, but he speaks of it at greater length in his Republic and his Dialogues. To the astonishment of most people, Plato considers the drama as unnecessary ; as it has been said before, he hates tragedies and the poets.

The Greeks were an artistic people, and they were the people who really invented the drama. There may have been dramas extant before the Greeks invented theirs ; for instance, the dramas of Indian literature, such as the *Sakuntala* by Kalidasa. The date of Kalidasa is, however, a matter

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

of dispute. They were not real dramas, which portrayed men and women of everyday life, but were representations of life in a form which was merely poetry and religion combined. We must go to Aristotle for a true definition of a drama. He says dramas are intended to elevate our whole being, to purify our passions ; they should be the means of a thorough purification. When we go to see a drama we do not want to see interesting tales and scenic effect only, but something that will give a shock to our senses, so that we can say we have gained something, we have been raised, as we would be, by the real drama of life. This was what the Greeks considered a drama should be, and after two thousand years we know that it is true to-day. And if we do not, we shall know it in time, that a real drama is a great moral lesson, such as nothing else can give us. It will appeal to all, to young and old, to any and every person, and to all ages, on account of its real ethical force.

With us to-day all this is an exception ; we do not have real dramas, and, not to be tender on a point, it may be said that we do not have great preachers either. Now, there were very great preachers in the seventeenth century and the eighteenth, who themselves were artists—Tillotson in England, Bossuet in France, to name two only. A really great preacher may, and does, affect people very strongly. The author heard such a one once in the Nôtre

PLATO

Dame in Paris. Whether we were Catholic or not—whether we agreed with all the tenets of his creed or not—we felt that from that man came a great ethical force, which got at us, reached us. Why? Because he was a dramatist, a great artist himself. With the central figure of all that great religious drama he identifies himself; he is himself not the Saviour, but one of them, a friend of the Saviour, and an eye-witness, an actor in the great drama, the execution of the Saviour; he speaks in that capacity, and he feels he can teach us a life-lesson from that memorable Friday, and tells us of things which exalt us. He brings it all back to us in reality, and makes us one with him in it by his great ethical force; and this is drama. Was not Aristotle right when he said, "it will purify you"? Yes; we go away with a higher ideal of life, with the thought that we have gained something, a thorough shock to our inner senses.

If the Greeks, then, thought so highly of the drama, why does Plato say, "I do not want dramas and dramatic actors"? He positively forbids it; and calls Homer, Sophocles, and the rest of them corrupters of youth. Why? We have, no doubt, seen Greek plays acted at Westminster School, or at Cambridge, and they may have seemed lifeless to us. Plato disapproved of them because they seemed too trivial by the side of the great drama of Greek life that was being

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

enacted all around them in the ideal State of Plato. That was drama, and that was what Plato wished to idealize, and that is why he would have none of the counterfeit, which seemed to him too trivial. But none the less there was true drama in the Antigone of Sophocles, and in the Oedipus Tyrannus. Apart from our more or less traditional interest in the works of the ancients, we cannot fail to be touched even now by the power and effect on our whole system of the characters portrayed by these artists; what effect, then, would they have had on the Greeks, in their intense richness of life, who saw them played, not once or twice, but frequently?

We have, perhaps, been shaken at times by the music of Mendelssohn or Beethoven. Well, it was the dream of Beethoven to write music to such themes as these, and especially to that great theme of Oedipus, the awful anti-climax in whose tragedy was that, having married his own mother, he was both father and brother to his own children. The whole subject is too grotesque for our imagination; we feel the terror of the thing, and it is a true terror which purifies our passions, and drives us to the thought of a higher ideal. With the Greeks it was the man who was perfectly happy who was hated by the gods. The gods will not allow us to be happy under any conditions. When we are happy, the gods come

PLATO

down on us, and say, “ You are the unhappiest of men, and nothing remains for you but madness or suicide.” All this shakes us up, and it is rather of an ecstatic shock ; and we may not think so, but it is pleasurable to be shocked in this manner. It is a true saying that whom the gods would destroy they first made mad, really drunken with his own happiness. And thus it is that Euripides deals with his Heracles. We feel that reading Euripides is not a matter of erudition ; it is too bad altogether ; it is as if we had been told of the death of a mother or a son, and we are possessed with a feeling of poignant pain and sorrow. We might say it is too bad, and that it is painful to any man of feeling to read these things. It is, however, what the Greeks called *κάθαρσις*, a purification by means of the dramatic art. We have it, too, in our own Shakespeare, in his *Richard III.*, in *King Lear* ; we feel something is happening to our very selves ; our own feelings are being racked and torn in sympathy with the characters.

Here we have Plato, one of the greatest sages of the world, and he is not an abstruse thinker, but a man of simple words—a man who uses words, but rarely uses terms (except, perhaps, his *οὐσία* and his *idea*)—not like our Oxford and Cambridge professors, who are fond of big words and ferret out “ terms ” to apply to their subjects—such a man, then, as Plato, an essentially practical

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

thinker, tells us in plain and simple words that we must have no dramas. He is fully aware of the effect of dramas; he understands human and divine passions; and that man forbids it. Why? It takes more than knowing Greek to know Plato. We may be able to read Greek thoroughly, and to read Plato, but to understand him is a different thing. Kant and Spencer both said Plato was an idealist, and, like all idealists, he went too far. But this is all nonsense.

French novels are seldom intense; but in France the drama plays a wonderful social *rôle*; and it does the same in Austria. There Anzengruber wanted to teach socialist doctrines through the drama, and won lasting fame by his characterization of common peasant life. It is in the quiet home life of small places that the dramatist is produced. We will find him in Germany—many such—as Germany had not become an empire yet; it was only just beginning, and bound to become one in the future. Here we have Goethe and Schiller, and they came from quiet places, and lived in a country where drama has a great influence. Their country had reached the phase that England was in under Elizabeth, when the English dramatists came. And if the drama gives us not only pleasure, but is also a great social force, ought we to say with Plato that we shall have no dramas, and ought we to expel our dramatists?

Let us venture to say, with reference to that

PLATO

passage of Plato, that he was not childish, but that he was perfectly right. He puts down extreme cases. As we have seen in a former chapter, that even to measure a field we must assume there are lines—a purely imaginary thing, which has length only, but no breadth—and that we thus apply a purely ideal thing every time we measure anything. So it is with Plato. We must not take him literally. In his ideal state no dramas were needed, because the state itself, and every part played by the intensest of people, was a drama in itself. “We are ourselves a drama, and what we say and what we do are parts of that drama,” is what he would have had the Greeks to say. But what we want is to be unlike ourselves ; to teach other ideas, and not to teach what we really are. So in a nation which is a drama of its own : it will repudiate other dramas. This is what the profound remarks of Plato refer to.

Now, what is going to be said is not quite pleasant, although it is with no wish to tread on any one's toes. There can be no doubt that real Imperialism is unfavourable to literature ; it is certainly not favourable to drama. The Romans, for instance, with their mighty empire, had no dramatists. They had comedies by Plautus, there was Seneca—all very clever ; but they were only book dramas. Merely eating and drinking and smoking does not really affect us, nor did it the Romans. There was no *κάθαρσις* about all this.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

The late Professor Nettleship of Oxford said the same thing to the author once, as to the reason why the Romans had no great dramas, that the Roman nation were so proud that they would never permit a poet to represent them on the stage. The Censor, like our Lord Chamberlain, would at once step in, and say, "We cannot allow you to make such representations." The women, too, appealed against it, and said, "No; we cannot permit ourselves to be portrayed on the stage." Whatever they might be in private, they were too prude in public; and when real women are not allowed to be represented on the stage, what can the dramatist do? In France, too, the dramatist cannot do anything. He cannot represent an innocent girl; she is too colourless, from the manner of her bringing up, in France; so he fetches the married women, and the result is that literature and drama are both spoilt in France. And so it was with Rome, where Lesbia and Catullus in a fine drama would have played an exquisite rôle. But no; the Romans said it would never do.

Lessing had another explanation of the failure of the Romans in producing dramas; it was their great love of gladiatorial games. There they were, hired men killing one another in right earnest. Here was gladiator A fighting with gladiator B, and the victor would look round, and when he saw the fingers stretched out he would

PLATO

stab the vanquished to death. Of what use is drama to a people like this? When the audience sees real death, sham death on the stage cannot affect them; it is real live death that they want. Yet the Spaniards, too, had real gladiatorial *fêtes*, such as bull-fights, which brought out the qualities of strength and courage, and many were the toreadors who were killed in these fights. But in spite of this, they had some wonderful dramas in the beginning of the seventeenth century; works of those great men Lope de Vega and Calderon, who enriched Spain and the world with a wealth of dramatic literature. What is the explanation of all this? We have it in Plato negatively. He is art all through, and he will tell us any number of stories more by what he does not say than by what he does say; his *sous-entendus* and innuendoes contain latent truth; and all this is a fine work of art—a work of art which we never see so fine in other workers. He is right when he says in an ideal state we want no dramas, and he explains his reasons better by what he does not say than Nettleship or Lessing explained by what they did say. Of them Plato might say, "They are bred in a state that is petty; but we Greeks are ourselves dramatic, therefore we don't want you or dramas."

Let us consider Napoleon. After the great tragedy of Austerlitz and Jena he was practically ruler of the world. *There* was his great drama.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Times without number he said he would like to have a great dramatist, a great poet, a great painter; as if he could command them to be made and have them; but it could not be. David's picture of the Coronation was grand, but Napoleon would say to him, "Cannot you do anything better?" He was not satisfied, and wanted something greater. In conversation with Goethe at Erfurt, Napoleon said, "There is no fate in dramas; politics is fate, I am fate." So great was the drama that he himself enacted at Marengo, at Austerlitz, at Jena: what could a poet do after these? A state, then, in which dramatic life, at its highest pitch, is still going on, does not want dramas.

Imperialism is a great drama in itself. Take America, where nothing is thought of but the great art of dollars. There if a man wrote a great drama, he would be a millionaire in a week, for, with their wealth, they would advertise it and run it all over the world. It is needless to say that thousands have essayed such a thing, but not one has succeeded. And the reason for this is that their greatest conflict is in political life and in the making of money; and they say, like Plato, "We will do without dramas; we have our own great dramas of life, and besides these everything else is puny."

If we think closely we will find that this is also largely the case with England. The English

PLATO

have the greatest of modern empires ; they have many enemies around them, and war may come at any time, perhaps with Germany. All their doings are so intensely dramatic that all the minor conflicts of life appear entirely silly. Continental people are petty. They will keep one for two hours, discussing a matter of two pounds—any “tuppenny” thing. No Englishman will ever do that ; time is too precious to him, in the drama of life in which he is engaged, to trifle with petty matters. And no American will do it either ; when he is bankrupt, he says he is bankrupt, and there that particular part of the drama is at an end. An Italian, on the other hand, would be most dramatic over the matter of a penny. Such petty, puny dramas are impossible where the whole state is permeated with a great drama ; and that great drama with the English is the British Empire.

This we see exemplified in the English theatres. Where is the modern English play that has the effect of the Greek *κάθαρσις* ? It is all hopelessly poor, and it never touches the heart or the senses. It is only another form of the music-hall. Such as these there are in England, but no dramas ; the English are a drama in themselves. This is what Plato means when he says it is revolting that people, after their hard day’s work and conflict, should go to a music-hall to feast on lemonade. There can be seen nightly the kaleidoscopic,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

maddening titbits in the form of *yodeling*—*yodeling* with the legs as well as—*yodeling* with the voice, with the eyes and arms. How can people stand it! The Spaniards have their bull-fights, the English and the French have their anodyne amusements; and these are no amusements whatever, because they are in the midst of their great drama of life. At such a period of existence the production of a Shakespeare would be impossible. Has not the author been taken to task by at least fifteen English papers because he stated that Shakespeare existed when the English had no empire? Scotland and Ireland in Shakespeare's time were not parts of the empire—at least, Ireland only partially, and Scotland not at all; while in France the English had not a single village: a few adventurers, yes, who went afar to colonize as they wished; but England had no imperial drama of its own. Then the English wanted and did have a dramatist of their own, who could portray the passions of men; and so rose Shakespeare, that great mind, who tore up kingdoms, and probed deeply into humanity with his Röntgenizing eyes. When the Chathams and the Pitts came, the days of the Shakespeares were gone; and the people of this country could say then that the British Empire was lumped together into one gigantic Shakespeare. There are English poets—many of them—and they try to be dramatic. There is Mr. A. or Mr. B.

PLATO

He is a great poet, and very melodious ; he has written many a drama ; very nice they are—but nobody wants to see them or to read them ; they are bought for their bindings. But drama cannot be got from them.

The English, in their easy-going way, say, “ We will have a great war with Germany very soon, and we shall do great things.” There is no doubt they will, as they have done before ; but in the mean time they read their *Tit-Bits*.

Think of Littré, the writer of the French Dictionary, a Herculean task undertaken by a man of Herculean build, and it took him all his life-time. When he had finished it he was thinner than the thinnest letter in his dictionary, and he talked like a child. It may be taken as an axiom that that man, when he has finished his day’s work and talks like a child, that is the man who can laugh. That seems very frivolous, but no one is so frivolous as he who is a great worker. And so with nations. When a nation has a tremendous drama going on for, say, two hundred years ; when it is undergoing its *káθaporis*, and is engaged in the intensest of conflicts, that nation cannot have a dramatist.

It is only small nations, with quiet, homely lives, that produce them. Where did the great German dramatists come from ? Goethe from Weimar, a town like a picture, with its quiet, homely surroundings. Lessing wrote in a small

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

place, Wolfenbüttel, where he was a librarian. Where did Bach get his music from? Leipsic, which was then a small place, where he lived with two wives (in succession, of course) and his numerous children. If we read his Biography we shall find it all there. Living a most small life, yet having ideas bigger than an empire; and having received such a very big mind, he was enabled to give it out, from the ideal life that he led. We talk, too, of Dante. Where did he come from? He came from Florence, which was then a small town, and not from the great Holy Roman Empire; and in that intense city of developments he was able to find those wonderful images which we find portrayed in his works. This is the meaning of Plato when he says, "Don't come to us; we ourselves are damatists."

In the author's time there was a great struggle in Vienna as to which party one belonged to, Wagner or Brahm. It was a case of believing in one or the other. Franz Lachner was asked which party he belonged to (*Sind Sie Brahmianer oder Wagnerianer?*). "I am myself," said he (*Selber aner*), "I am neither the one nor the other." This is the comical, the humorous side of the explanation of Plato. With him the ideal state does not want the drama; they corrupt the manners of the young; but it is not the intention that the dramatic art should be altogether lost. If dramas are impossible in a great empire, can

PLATO

nothing be done to replace the functions of the drama ? If the English expect to produce another Shakespeare, that is impossible, either here or in America, and they may make up their minds to that ; their modern drama is the modern novel. We may not be able to prevent the primary cause of the death of the drama ; but what are the secondary causes in England which prevent the rise of the drama ? Let us see what they are, and if we can tone them down. The people of this country say they would like their sons to go and see a great drama—something not quite of the music-hall stamp, something that will rouse up their inmost feelings, something that will make them undergo a true *káθapsis*. Well, they will not like what is going to be said ; but let the truth be told. The secondary cause which is causing the death of the English drama is Protestantism. Protestantism has undoubtedly helped this country to become a great, a powerful nation. It has helped the people to establish order and method, by which they do great things. They feel that when they say A, they must follow with B, and so on. But they must take the good with the bad ; and there is no doubt that in Protestantism the clergy want to “ ethicalize ” them : they take up the functions which, with the Greeks, were left to the theatres. They want to speak to the people as Homer, as Sophocles did, and they have made them pass a law not to have theatres open on

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Sundays. Now, where will we find it in the Bible, excepting by distorting words, that people may not go to a theatre on a Sunday? It might have been prohibited on a Saturday, but why on a Sunday? Surely a play of Shakespeare might be acted, if not on a Sunday, then on a Saturday. Take the labourer, who has never come out of his provincial life—take him out of his dull, daily routine, and make it a sort of custom that he will see every Saturday, if not on Sunday, something of the country's great dramas, something of Shakespeare. Give it to him in the crude, nude state without elaborate costumes and elaborate scenery, which only go to raise prices. For the costumes are truly absurd, as a friend of the author's in the British Museum, who has made costumes a study, told him that the costumes put on the characters of Shakespeare are grotesque and untrue in the extreme. The man will thus be given a chance of a little *κάθαρσις*. Talk to him as Plato would; for religion only leaves him callous. And when he has been sent to the theatre to see *King Lear*, the difference in him will be at once apparent; he will have undergone an entire change, he will be an altogether new man. His eyes will start out, he will be all alive, this *bourgeois des bourgeois*. This, then, is the power of poetry; this is the power of the drama.

It will be found from experience that Imperialism is great in power, great in money, but not

PLATO

great in intellect. But that cannot be if we cannot have, like the Greeks, something near to the ideal which the Greeks had. The clergyman must be told that he must open the theatres on Sundays. We must ask him if it is forbidden in the Bible ; for if we search the Bible we will find it is an ordinary day. The people have made a law about the Sunday, but if they abolish the law they will do their nation a world of good.

It is said that a law cannot be made that a man must drink only water, and must not drink alcohol, because it cannot be proved that alcohol is bad. But is it not possible to reduce the opportunities of drinking too much alcohol ? The people should be given amusements, they should be given the theatre on the Sunday, and then it will be found that they are automatically taken away from the horrid bar. A man must take something. If he does not take alcohol he will take opium, or hashish, or even eau-de-Cologne. It is necessary to stop the cause before attacking the effect. The remedy is to give him amusement, to let him have that *káθapsis*, and all this can be done with the drama of the country. And such a step would add immeasurably to the greatness of the nation, for the drama is not only an æsthetic, it is a great social force. And it was this social force that led to Irving's being made a knight.

The whole thing in Plato means that, unless

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

we have reached that perfect ideal state, we do need dramas. It is when that perfect ideal state is reached, when we are our own drama in perfection, and only then, can we afford to say, "I don't want dramatists ; I don't want a drama. Don't come to me." It was remarked in a previous chapter that Plato said we slept too much ; that we ought to get up during the night and see that things were in order, and so on. To us it all seems very horrid because we are not in the ideal state we ought to be. And so it is with the drama. There was one state that came very near to this ideal, and that was Sparta. They never had a dramatist, and never wanted dramatic actors. When any one of that calling came to Sparta, the Ephors said " We do not want you." Their life was too full to stand such mimicries and trivialities. If they did come at any time, and happened to be received, the plays were witnessed with derision.

And so it is with Englishmen. It is their country, their empire, and their riches that make their drama. But whether they have reached that ideal state yet, must be left to the people to consider. It can, however, be said that Plato was perfectly right. As a great practical thinker he knew the meaning of a drama. Are not his Dialogues dramas ? Is not his account of the death of Socrates most dramatic ? Because he condemns drama, must we think he did not feel

PLATO

what he wrote ? The best thing for ourselves, no doubt, is to be in that ideal state so as not to need dramas ; but that ideal state we must go on striving to attain, higher and higher, nearer and nearer. But we must not assume we have reached it if we want to be really great. Raphael, as we have heard in a previous chapter, had on his imagination a painting infinitely greater than anything he had ever painted. Had he not always that imagination he would never have become the great painter that he was.

So with musicians. Why does an ordinary pianist fail ? Because he has not the power of tearing his inside, as it were ; of realizing that there is an execution far greater than anything of his own can ever be. It is the case of the asymptote : it is nearer and nearer we go, but we never reach. "It is all very well," people might think, "these sayings of Plato. They sound nice, but they are beyond us." No, it might be stated positively, they are wrong. We *must* have such ideals, and strive to get nearer and nearer to the highest. Without such ideals we will do nothing. If Raphael had been born without arms he still would have painted, he still would have risen to the height he did. On the other hand, the musician just referred to, that we all know in our drawing-rooms and elsewhere, who has just played something really good, turns round to see what effect it has had, and hears it said,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

“Isn’t he a divine player!” That is enough for him, and he is satisfied. That alone has undoubtedly prevented him from becoming a great player.

Let us try, then, to think of reaching an ideal. It is not necessary for each man to strive after the same ideal. There are a thousand ways that lead to it, as there were many roads that led to Rome; and unless we have such a higher ideal—and they are not merely *dans le bleu*—we will never reach the less perfect thing, much less the highest. And he who has not got such an ideal is lost.

And so it is with nations. A self-centred nation is lost. We have only to look at the positive self-satisfaction of the Americans; everything is “all right” with them. But assuredly there is something with them that is not “all right;” everything is all wrong. Englishmen are grumblers; but if they are grumbling they are, at the same time, trying to get higher. That is the right way; but it is necessary to think pessimistically, to become advanced.

Why was Paganini a great player? He went about and was over-praised, yet he used to say, “What I hear here” (pointing to his forehead), “I can’t do that. I begin to think, but I can’t reach it.” Nevertheless, he went on his tour, and the whole world went mad over him. Had he not had that feeling, that ideal which seemed unattainable, we would have had no Paganini.

PLATO

We have heard something of the sayings of Plato. Let us not only hear them, but let us try to realize them; otherwise it will be found that life is not worth living. Our ideals will lead us through conflicts, no doubt, but they will lead us higher; and it is only through conflicts that we become great as a nation. And so it is with individuals. We each of us become great by our conflicts with ourselves, with our ideals.

CHAPTER V

WE have finished with the seventh book of Plato in our previous chapters. And we now come to deal with his eighth, and in this we find him treating of all manner of festivities and sports which were so utterly different in their character from what we are doing now, in these modern times, that they are altogether unsuitable for us to waste our time over. Passing over these we come to a subject which neither Plato nor any one else can exhaust; it is a subject of intense interest to us all, to young and to old; and it has been so for all ages, and that is the subject of love.

Now, in Plato we will find no strict system laid down on this subject. With him there is no consistency; he gives nowhere in his book anything that would lead us to suppose it was his last final solution of the problem. Plato consists of just one doctrine, and that is of ideas; but for the rest he is dealing with infinity, in its vast aspect. In every one of his opinions he has the character of continually changing; he contradicts himself freely, and he never appears

PLATO

to be consistent. He never is the schoolmaster laying down fixed rules, but directs our attention to vital points. He says to us, as it were, “I stand on the shore ; before me lies the sea. I do not know, I do not assert that the shore lies on the other side ; it may not, for it may lead to a wider sea, and so on beyond. I tell you only of what I find here—a few shells, a few curiosities on the shore. Come, and let us seek the treasures of the deep.” He will not say, “I think so,” or it is so ; but all his opinions are open to change ; and this we must not look upon as contradiction, or a conflict of opinion, but a growth.

With these preliminary remarks let us consider the subject of love. It is so full of various aspects. It changes with countries and with the thoughts of different times. Plato, in dealing with the subject, treats it quite differently in his Symposium, in his Laws, and in his Republic ; and we cannot wonder at it. To bring this enormous subject into a few lines is quite impossible. We must consider how the Greeks expressed love in their mythology. They had their Venus, and Amor, and Eros, and Cupid, and others, not all representing the same idea of love, but each representing one separate aspect. The Symposium, we know, was really a banquet where people met to talk love—young men and old men. Socrates himself and old men met to deliver themselves on the subject ; it was on love

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

paternal, maternal, and fraternal ; on the abstract ideals of love ; on the love of women ; on the love of art. It is for man the starting-point of interest ; where there is love it shows that man has an interest in the subject, and that love grows to desire. We remember Newton's answer when he was asked how he had made so many profound discoveries. "I have loved them, I have constantly thought of them," was his answer. Love is the desire, the interest, whether it be for knowledge or for another person, be it man or woman. It is that incessant desire to be present where the object of our love is. A young man thinking of the woman he loves desires to be where she is. If it is love of country, we desire to suffer with the country—to be there, to take part in its life ; it is love of place ; we want to be in the same place with the object of our love. If all this were not so, love would not last.

In these days it is necessary to go a little beyond Plato. For what makes Plato Plato is not any peculiar brain power he may have had. A man is no greater for a little more of the matter we call brains. This, as we saw in a previous chapter, has been argued out with physiologists and various phrenologists, and nothing of the kind has yet been proved for us to attribute greatness of intellect or thought to that mass of peculiar substance which we call brains. No, it is not brains but experience which made Plato what

PLATO

he is. He lived in a country where humanity was varied ; and in his travels, circumscribed though they were to our modern minds, found many varied types from which he could draw his profound conclusions. Although we are two thousand years after Plato we have discovered few new types ; but still, on the basis of another two thousand years, it must be assumed that we have had a wider experience, and with such added experience we feel justified in adding a rider or commentary on the subject as dealt with by Plato.

Our experience shows us that in each country they love differently ; each nation has its own peculiar way of showing love. The English are in this, as in all things, serious and grave, and they will not talk about it. French love, on the other hand, where it exists, makes men cheerful and gay ; they will tell extraordinary stories to each other whilst in love. Then, again, the greatest music has been inspired by this passion ; it is the heart of love. Take the *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni. It is to Italy we must go for music as the outcome of love. There we have the accents of passion which we hear nowhere else. We say to an Italian lover, “Are you unhappy ? Does the girl not return your love ?” “No no,” he says. He is sure of her, but in his love there is a deeper note ; his passion at once grows into something dark—something which we cannot

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

understand. Prosper Mérimée gives the love of the people of Spain, of Corsica, of Minorca. There they are quite wild, resembling the old Spartans in many ways; living in towers in their villages—towers which they live in for years sometimes, or perhaps never leave them. Here we will have vendetta with or without reason. It is terrible when it is without reason. It is all a play of love and passion. Prosper Mérimée knew them thoroughly, and his are the best novels dealing with the subject of these wild people. They give us an entirely different aspect of love to what we are accustomed to. The opera of *Carmen*, taken from Prosper Mérimée, gives an excellent idea of this peculiar aspect of love.

In England love is absolutely mute, and her greatest writers and poets seldom find means of expressing themselves about it, or giving words to it, except in the final scene, and then they never get above mere platitudes about love. They take for granted the passions which sway men, as if they were everywhere alike of a dull level. We hear Alcibiades saying to the people that Socrates resisted his love. This is rather grating to our senses, because we do not understand the Greeks. We do not understand their love of man for man, any more than the Greeks would have understood our relation to women. If we compare Stendhal's *Sur l'amour* with Plato we will see the

PLATO

difference, though he himself had a wonderful experience in the time of the great Napoleon ; agitated times, in which were many aspects of love which hit one badly.

Far greater, however, is Balzac, the man who introduced the modern woman, and the modern love of man for woman. Supplement Plato with Balzac, and we will have what love should be in modern times. Balzac is not a philosopher ; he is gross and brutal, and scarcely proper at times ; but for all that, he was great in his insight into the human heart. We would have expected Shakespeare to have brought forward the ideal of love in all its highest bearings, but he does not come up to our expectations. It will be remembered in the Symposium, when Plato speaks of the speech of Socrates, where he has referred to Alcibiades as saying he had resisted his love—all this, says Plato, is not love. What it is, he clothes in a myth which will be related later on. Love is immortality ; it is the desire to live beyond our physical existence. This is what comes nearest to love, and the consequences of love. No matter what sort of love it is, or where it is—here, or in America, or in India—it will be found to be an *appetitus*, a desire for immortality. It is often also a great excuse for many of the crimes of people, and thus it is another aspect of the passion.

Between ourselves and the Greeks there is

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

another great difference. Women, as we see them, are radically different from women as they were in Greece. In the Greek city-states they did not suffer from that peculiar rupture that we see between ourselves and the society of to-day; their life was in regular spheres, in concentric circles, so to speak. The life we live to-day may be divided into three circles; and these circles are by no means concentric. First of all, there is society, which has one set of rules, with its *convenances*, its exigencies, its boredom; the second circle is that of practical life, in which may be included officialdom and the various businesses of life; the third circle is the Church.

To be perfectly frank, these three circles do not agree at all. In the first and second circles men will send each other to prison for half a crown; and what we say in church on the Sunday we undo on the other days of the week. We will, in the third sphere, swear we will forgive each other's debts and shortcomings, and immediately afterwards we proceed to do the contrary. Perhaps there are persons who can reconcile these circles; it would seem, however, as extremely difficult; and yet there they are, these terrible contradictions from which we suffer. These are what we would call absolute contrasts, the wholesale mendacity of our present life, and they are the price we have to pay for our civilization.

Such things did not exist in Greece. With

PLATO

us a woman marries for reasons of society. What she wants may not be what society wants, but still she has to marry the man. What they want is one thing, what they get another. How can we reconcile these contradictions? Where the man and the woman marry for love, and the two spheres are reconciled, there we see the man is happy, and the evidences of it we see in his children. They are strong and happy, as the offspring of love should be. But how many men and women do we know who are so placed! There is another side to this case whence come the divorce cases. We know from experience that there are men and women married who are in utter contrast to each other. Plato says these are already in Hades; if they do not go wrong to-day they will to-morrow. Such contrasts, it may be said, are utterly irreconcilable. In Greece the three circles were more concentric; the desires of people were much toned down. If, for instance, a Spartan had been asked if he wanted to go anywhere else, to see other places, to live a life of different surroundings, he would have laughed at the question. "Sparta is our ideal," he would say. "All that we desire is there; and our own desires and the desires of state do not clash."

The inwardness of their life, their whole desire, centred in their love for their state, and they were perfectly happy. We see this well shown in

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Xenophon, who has some exquisite passages on the life of a gentleman farmer and his wife—a life of absolute contentedness. He brings his artistic observations to bear out all this, and such observations are better and truer than any other. He shows us the reposefulness of such a contented life ; it is like the composure of Greek statues. It may be possible to have fuller busts, and finer noses chiselled out ; but, as Raphael Mengs said, look at the reposefulness, it must have been in their hearts ; from these it went into their limbs ; from the arms into the fingers ; everything, in harmonious contentedness, from the toes to the curls. On the other hand, let us examine the sculptures of the Romans. In them there is none of that reposefulness, but instead we have rugged lines ; we see the restlessness of man, his fidgetiness ; and this is when the three spheres have ceased to be in connection ; when the concentric and harmonious nature of their action has been disturbed. To talk as did Plato, we should say the spheres were *epicyclic* ; there was always one thing in the machinery which was jarring, not quite in the normal position. Is it not necessary, then, that we should try to reconcile these non-concentric spheres of modern life ?

We have all heard of the famous French novels of Paul Bourget. It would be well, perhaps, not to say much of the English modern novels. They are mostly unnatural ; there is something in them

PLATO

that merely touches, but does not interest the heart ; they bore, and one cannot comprehend how any man can read them. Paul Bourget has also tried to tackle the difficult and delicate problem ; but the ways of Plato are not our modern ways ; they do not touch us as Mérimée does. There are the Russians, but there is nothing special in them. There is M. Jókai ; he is dreamy, and the effect is not lasting ; in a short time the reader forgets what he has read, because he has no earthly interest in the problem, if there be one. The French do, in a measure, tackle this problem. Bourget does it in his *Cruelle Énigme* ; his *femme* is a lady of society ; has nothing whatever to do, and spends her life in idleness ; she is handsome ; eats, drinks, goes to theatres ; and in the 400th page he tells us she has gone wrong. It is a marvel she has not gone wrong long before this page is reached.

All this is merely physiology ; it is not *amour*, and there is no problem in it. Plato says such people cannot love, and then he proceeds to hide what he has to say in a myth, and there are buried truths in his myths. "Remember my myth," says he ; it is artistic and correct ; for such things we cannot make rules or language ; we cannot articulate the deepest forces of our heart ; it is all poetry or it is song. Here is his myth. "I will tell you," says he, "how love arose. There was a large party and great festivities in honour of

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Venus ; there they were, all the gods and goddesses, and Poros among them. Everything was excellent ; they talked, they sang, they danced, and ate and drank, and they went into the garden where Poros, overcome by all he had gone through, fell asleep. Then there came along a poor wretchedly dressed woman, Penia ; and she thought to herself if I only go into the house, where there have been all these festivities, I might get something to eat and drink. So she passed unnoticed into the house, and having satisfied her wants in eating and drinking, she walked into the garden. Now this woman, though poor and wretchedly dressed, was very beautiful. Poros awoke, saw her and met her, and their child was Love."

Plato shows us in this fable that for the growth of love, wealth is not needed. It is all ideal, it is sublime ; and it is just by what he does not say that he condemns Paul Bourget. Love needs two, and it must be affection without care, without worry in their hearts. But if we work the woman, or the man, up artificially to fall in love, there is then no harmony, no children ; we do not have our circles concentric, but they overlap ; these are contrasts, and for that reason we do not have love as we have seen in the case of Poros.

Now let us see what our greatest poets have done in this matter. It is no use discussing

PLATO

Shakespeare. His women are not quite like our modern women. *Romeo and Juliet* was written when he was young—and it never takes our hearts completely—not as Goethe has done in his *Faust*, where “Faust” has all and “Gretchen” nothing. Plato, in the *Banquet*, says love cannot come from contrasts; it can only come where the two are similar; and we have the myth again where the man and the woman were one with four arms and four legs, and this creature revolted against the gods. The gods then came down and clove them in two, and now the one half is always going about searching for the other. Love, then, can only be perfect when it comes from similars; never when it is between contrasts.

In our modern times we see this emphasized very largely, these contrasts in love. We are not now talking of the love of father or mother, but the love of man for woman. And if we look at national experiences, what do we find? Take Nelson, a typical Englishman. It was not an Englishwoman that he loved, but the mother of his children was Welsh; and this was not according to what Plato lays down. Then, again, Napoleon. Did he love a Frenchwoman? No! He had two loves—one was a Creole, the other a Polishwoman. And it is so in all history. We have Cæsar not loving a Roman woman, but Cleopatra. With us it is the contrasts that have an attraction. It is the blonde that appeals to

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

the dark, and this is especially noticeable in France, where we have beautiful statistics to show the different departments where there are blonde and dark, and how the blonde will go away from one department to another and come back with a dark man. The German women who were captive, and led in chains through the city, sent the Romans mad over their blonde hair; and so it is in Italy, where it is typical of great beauty; as it is in Hungary, where blonde hair is considered a noble hair. These are, however, mysterious attractions, but it is not the essence of love. Why does Plato say that contrasts are not required? We must not take what he says as final; but we must not, at the same time, condemn him when he says that there is no true love in contrasts.

Let us now take another aspect of the case. The best and truest part of love is friendship, and in this we need a goodly number of similarities—more than we do in the love of man for woman. And instances have been known of great friendship, where the similarities of taste, of character, of thought, of temper were extraordinary; where, in fact, their minds had become one. Such were the two Goncourts; Erckmann-Chatrian—the two, Emile Erckmann and Alexander Chatrian; also the brothers Grimm, whose thoughts were so sympathetic that it was not possible to tell where Jacob stopped and where William continued. This is all true in friendship, but whether in love

PLATO

similarity can do such things we cannot understand.

Why does Plato say what he does? Has he any ideas that may control modern ideas? And this is what needs bringing home to us, what every modern man knows—that what Plato means is that love means immortality, and that it is essentially selfish, and that in this sense we are working for our own immortality. We do not articulate the ground bass of our nature, of the music that is in us. Bach, Mozart are infinitely great as masters of music, but they failed to articulate their bass; nor did Beethoven, who was so tender in his higher flights. We know what we want, a something that is great, something immortal; but society comes in the way and raises a conflict between the three circles. And this conflict between our hearts and society is so great that it often leads to tragedies, and these tragedies are caused by a profound and noble selfishness to ensure our own immortality. We cannot forget the terrible law of the Spartans. "She must have a child," they said; and they put their law into force with absolutely relentless logicality. "How long have you been married? Five or ten years, and no child! Why, you must have a child." That was a conflict which Balzac has tried in vain, in his works, to articulate. It was altogether obviated by the Spartans. With them it was an operation like any

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

other, and all operations are painful. The man who introduced the Spartan and the Cretan laws must have seen very deeply into human nature. " You may go wrong ; anyhow, what is the use of waiting for it ; " such is the very mild commentary on it, and the knife of Lycurgus cuts through the difficulty.

These ancient Greeks, these great artists in happiness, with the examples before them, and with their deep insight into the conflicts of the soul, had propounded a law that should produce content. No matter what we say, happiness is goodness ; but it can be said, without fear of being contradicted, that not one man of fifty has done good without suffering for it. What we think we earn by our action in the third sphere of the Church, is embittered by the grossest of ingratitudes in its many aspects, from the interference of the other spheres. It is not in knowledge but in harmony that we should try and reconcile the three spheres in which we live. We moderns cannot do it, but the Greeks have done it ; and that is what we admire in them ; that is why we have the reposefulness in their statues, rather large perhaps in the bust or the limbs for our tastes, but there is harmony in them from head to heel. It is impossible that we could excel them in this wonderful harmony, which only comes from a reconciliation of the three spheres. Why we differ from Plato in his ideas is that he

PLATO

lived in a country where cleavages between the different spheres were non-existent. In modern times the ideas of life are so totally different from what they were with the Greeks. With us life is a study in pathology; we suffer for breaches in the spheres, and we cannot therefore be absolutely certain of immortality. We hope for something, but we are not sure of it.

The Greeks had their mysteries of Eleusis, a place near Athens. These mysteries referred to the next world, but they kept them all as the deepest of secrets. We have explored all round Eleusis, but we have found no trace of anything that will reveal to us the smallest inkling of these mysteries, though we can reconstruct line for line all else in their lives. With them these things were too holy, things that must not be talked about. We, on the other hand, talk so much because we are in doubt. The really rich will never speak of the dollar, but in America there is the *nouveau riche*, and he is continually talking of his dollars. From Homer downwards we may look through all the works of the Greeks and we never find them talking of immortality. Rhode, in that great and erudite work of his, which he calls "Psyche," tells us what the Greeks thought of immortality. They had the assurance that it was love, which was the greatest asset we have in life. Such an asset had the Theban guard who fell at their posts at Chaeronea; these men loved

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

one another deeply and passionately, and that was pure love.

And now let us consider, not as theologians, but as students of history, how some of these ideals have been realized in modern times, and in the next best state to what the Greeks had, and that in the Roman Catholic Church. We find in that Church another expression of that love, the beauty of immortality in raptures in that one man, St. Francis, who was a complete incarnation of the idea of love. He was so full of love that he loved everything and everybody. A plant, a stone, a man, even a man covered with ulcers, and he would kiss and love the ulcers; and in the light of this great ideal *nos amours sont des amourettes*. It was, indeed, the Greek ideal realized by the Catholic Church. We cannot love as he loved, and the Catholic Church was right in calling him a saint. We call it ideal, but he incorporated the great ideal we call love. Spinoza, again, was very nice and kind and humane, but there was something wanting in him. We can talk of him and say there is grace in this or that he did, but he had not the *gratia lacrymarum* as St. Francis, who often wept in an ecstasy of love. With St. Francis it was an enthusiasm of enchantment; he was like one of these Greek statues, in perfect repose, and an absolutely sure guarantee of what we call immortality.

PLATO

In comparing, then, the ancient Greeks with ourselves, we find the differences in all sorts of relations so great that we must not expect to have more harmony, but we must try to be less morbid, less cankered, less eccentric. The last word cannot be with Plato for the reason that we are not centred in one circle; our circles are not those of the Greeks. Our civilization is more complicated, and when we treat of the great subject of love and take Plato as our guide, we must make allowances.

Let us take in the next place our poets. Plato would have said that they are all unsound. If we read them at different times, and at different ages, we will find the funny experience that what we admire at the age of twenty will seem stale to us when we are forty; or the experience may be the reverse. It is the test of all books; we cannot say that what we have read in such and such a book is the final word that can be said on a given subject. It may survive or it may not. Without in the least wishing to pose as Hellenes, or as Neo-Hellenes, we may be permitted to say that from Shakespeare downwards, and from Molière downwards, there would appear to be something unsound; something quite different from the ideal state; we dare not, in fact, love. In the Greek writers there was an absolute lack of all redundancy; *they* had ideals. Love is the rarest of all things. Thousands of people

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

would like to love ; they do for a few weeks. But is that love ? Let us examine the Greek stories ; let us take Euripides. With him it does not indicate barbarous brutality, but a full, boundless force—a full-fledged force.

In modern times it would be difficult to say What is love ? We should perhaps divide it into classes. In the first class we should place the love between parent and child, which is of a less passionate character, and we see different phases of this in different countries. Then there is the love of a young man and a young girl. Plato only incidentally refers to this, but he tells us enough to give us a hint of his meaning. Next, there is that which is considered love by society. It is on that that we get special lights from Plato. He gives us the perspective to show us the real inwardness of it, and it is for us to consider and see whether, with our modern experiences, those ideas he gives us ought to be changed or not. It is the dealing with love where there is no sin yet, but where there may be sin. In this connection we should be reminded of those Spanish authors who have written some very great novels. They are modern and wonderful in their way, and they excel the French novels in that they are grave, and they tackle the real problems of love. And it is right, when dealing with this question, that we should have the views of Spain, as well as of Italy and France.

PLATO

Having treated of all this we shall come back to our Symposium, and then we will read the speech of Socrates; and though surrounded by myth, there we will find the bloom and blossom of Plato, and by the light of that we will comprehend clearly our own times and the times of the Greeks. This subject will be left for our remaining chapters.

CHAPTER VI

OUR subject now is the subject of love; but we will not deal at once with this subject of love in all its many different aspects. The aspect we have to dwell on at the present moment is pre-eminently the aspect of parental love; the love of father and mother for their children. It is impossible to give a connected story or description of that powerful passion; it has an intense interest for all of us, whether our thoughts are dwelling on Plato or on other thinkers. In Plato we find a most suggestive passage wherein he says that love is the aspiration of the mortal for the divine; that love is the desire of the deepest force, something between mortal and immortal. We know the Greeks had a certain being that was not a god, their *δαιμόνιον*, an intermediary existence between something absolutely divine and ordinary mortals; and it was this idea of theirs that love was something beyond mortal.

Now, it has always seemed that this great subject of love which the schoolmaster or the ordinary teacher never touches upon—they pass by it as if it were no concern of theirs—is nevertheless of

PLATO

very great concern to most of us, whether it be love of parents for child, or man for his country, or love in its many other aspects. Plato, when he speaks of love, speaks of it as the general principle of the universe, the real cause behind all, which keeps it all going ; it is the unifying force of everything material and spiritual, but it is so complicated that we cannot treat of its many aspects all at once.

Love consists of two forces, and that is what we need to have clearly before us now. These two love forces, are best expressed in Greek terms which will give us the essence of their meaning. The first is *κτῆσις*, which means possession, a virtual possession ; "something," one might say "I haven't got, but will eventually get it ; I am certain to get it in time." The second is *έξις*, which means actual possession, when one has actually got the thing desired. Let us hold these definitions strongly before our minds. Before we can see what is love, whether it be paternal or patriotic ; whether it be of a vulgar and of a material kind ; or whether it be ideal and spiritual ; Venus or Cupid or Eros ; no matter what sort of love it is ; we must keep the distinction clearly before our minds between the virtual and the actual possession ; and between them there is a great difference.

And unless we do, there is the danger that we fall victims to Schopenhauer's idea of love, which

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

in itself is very true. And so we shall find in Spinoza a very beautiful passage on the subject. But philosophers as a rule avoided the subject ; and Schopenhauer was not married, and it must be contended that those who are not married cannot speak of love ; they have not the experience, they cannot have a true idea or knowledge of love. But Schopenhauer knew the *thing*, the great subject of love, and he puts his idea forth in his great work ; his chapter on the metaphysics of Sexual Love is very great indeed, but it does not complete the *thing*. It has a ricochet effect, it is brilliant and also true but not complete. As men and women of the world, we know, and it needs no emphasizing, that love is all, it is the heart of everything ; and it requires no great flight of fancy to suppose that a man who had loved very much—loved sincerely and honestly—might discover the essence of love.

Let us take Rouchefoucauld, who lived in the time of Louis XIII. He was loved passionately by one of the most beautiful of women, the Duchesse de Longueville, and when he speaks of love we say that he ought to know what it is. And what is it that he says of love ? He says that love is like a spectre, everybody talks a great deal about it, but nobody has seen it. He had what the French call *une âme sèche*, his was an absolutely dry soul ; there was no shudder, no emotional warmth in him. Whether we consult

PLATO

such a one as this, or the greatest of modern philosophers such as Schopenhauer we will find them unsympathetic ; it is like Wagner in music ; and when we consider and think over it, as men of the world should, we will find that it is not complete.

Love is indeed the whole of life in one shape or another. All good ideas come from the heart, and if we stifle the emotions, we kill the intelligences, we kill love ; it is, as Darwin tells us, by repression we kill the emotions ; the emotions that are repressed become, in fact, atrophied. That is why we admired, in our last chapter, St. Francis d'Assissi, the embodiment of love ; and it is so with children. We love them ; they come to us and say, “Do you love me ?” It is any amount of love that they want, and we love the *naïveté* of a silly child. Mozart, too, always asked this, though he, with all he did, could not be called childlike ; it is with them indeed the transcendental idea that love is the essence of life ; without it life is nothing.

What is it that covers all the various aspects of love ? We cannot help thinking that Plato does not cover the whole subject, though he helps us to understand the two distinct ideas of virtual and actual possession. We shall find, too, in his writings, more than one allusion to make us understand love very much better than we would understand it from the writings of any other author. All the ideas of Schopenhauer that we

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

have been talking about were expressed by Plato long ago, and we may sum them up in the definition that Love is the love of immortality. We should try to comprehend that whatever we love, it is not the subject or the object we love, but something which assures us of something of immortality. It may be our country, for instance ; *that* we see is going on for ever, how can our love affect it ? No, the love of country is for the glory and immortality of our race, of the country with which our whole life is bound up. It may be for our children ; *there* it is the love of children in whom we ourselves are re-incarnated. It is not the child we love, but immortality ; we trace the idea that our own individualities are being perpetuated in that child ; we love therefore immortality, eternity that thus comes to a vanishing point within us. And it is when this fails that we get what is called the tragedy of love ; that is the tragedy.

We see it perpetually. We go to a little village in Bavaria ; we enter an inn on a Sunday ; there will be dancing and drinking of heavy beer ; there will be great coarse peasants making their jokes, behaving awkwardly and vulgarly ; and there in a corner we will see a girl. She is not dancing, she is not singing, or amusing herself with the rest, and we ask why ? She is beautiful and young, and we see that she is treated with great delicacy and with great consideration. The reason,

PLATO

the story, is that she loved a man, and he has deserted her ; and even the rough, coarse peasants are aware of the tragedy of love ; they are in the presence of immortality. Let us picture, too, a young man and a girl, she the mother of a child, and the young man has deserted her, there is the tragedy of love. The author has seen a picture in Austria where a young girl is depicted kneeling, and clasping a crucifix by the roadside, and at the feet of that emblem of love lying her new-born babe, whilst on the other side passes the man who has seduced her, walking with his bride, a richer woman perhaps. But there is the tragedy of love. The German peasants have a way of caricaturing things in what they call “four-liners,” *Vierzeiler*, they will use this on the people of Austria, on the criticism of life ; but when it is on love, there is no humour in it, there is no satire. When a girl loved a man it becomes a sacred thing ; it is a respect for immortality which no satire should touch.

Love, then, in all its aspects is the love of immortality ; it is the guarantee of immortality, and it is the most important of any passion, for it is not a passion for the individual but for the whole future race ; for the re-incarnation of ourselves. Let us suppose Venus to come down now from Olympus, and to need a mortal man, is there a man who would love her ? No, he could not love her, because she is immortal. We naturally

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

feel something in us which is the echo of something much greater ; it is something at the back of us, a force behind us which is impelling us to greater things, to immortality. We, mortals, being what we are, how can we love persons necessarily immortal ?

We must bow to Plato and to Schopenhauer, but we are sanguine that love is not the love of what we feel and think, but at the behest of our inmost soul, by the impelling of that force behind us, we shall realize the ideal that love is the love of our species, to perpetuate humanity, to get to something immortal, a new life, and new men, new women, and new children. An author is really not the exponent of love, he is only as it were the table, the table on which Shakespeare wrote Hamlet ; he is not the writer, but only the table on which is written love. We ourselves are the living tablets of love. There are entirely different ideas of it, and it is infinitely beyond everything we know of. It may be love of wife, or child, or of country, but it is always beyond the individual or the object. We, indeed, think we love ; we say, love fills me to the brim, that nothing is more my own property than my love. Let us not deceive ourselves, such is not the case. It is the force that comes to us from something higher ; and that is the reason why it has driven men to ruin. Patriotism will drive men to neglect everything, to forget wife, child, and all other

PLATO

cares of life ; another will be driven to the seeking of glory, another to that of happiness ; another again to the finding out of some abstruse mathematical formula ; all these may drive men to ruin. A man cannot help himself, it is the something beyond him which drives him.

When we speak of St. Francis, every one of us, whether a Jew or a Mohammedan or a Catholic, must bow before him, for he is the presentment of the love of that vast thing we call the Church, to which he was impelled by the impulse of that greater force behind, something which was infinitely beyond him. And so it is with us, it is what we feel when we are loving a child, an idea, a profession, we are as it were, walking on clouds ; we are acted on by living forces in a sphere which is totally different from ours. This does bring us into contrasts with many of our conventional ideas, but it is love of immortality, in any shape we like ; love forced on us by our species, by something higher than ourselves. It is something so great that it is not we that love, but something very much higher that loves in us. We will see this better when, in a future chapter, we have read the speech of Socrates, in which he says that this something higher alone gives us the assurance that love is not only passion, but that love is life itself. In ordinary life all this might be considered *exaltée*, an exaggeration, but it is not so. It may be stated positively that we ourselves are only

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

playing a secondary *rôle* where love is concerned. Behind us is the real propelling force, and, however much it may impel us we can never really seize the essence of love. It is not to be done, it is infinitely more than we can reach. But the two Greek terms we had signifying virtual possession and actual possession, alone give us the key, the clue to our grasping the meaning of it all.

Now, love is essentially altruistic, it thinks of the other person, how to make another happy; but this is not the nature of passion as a rule. Passion is essentially egoistic; but with love it is the love of immortality, and it is dictated by something behind us and which is treating us like a puppet, and so it is that it can be both egoistic and altruistic. What is the love of the parent for the child? We see it in animals, in dogs, cats, lions, and tigers, and it is the most astounding thing we know of; it is, no doubt, in the lowest form of animals too, that same blind devotion. As it is in the man loving a girl, or dying for his country, so it is with the tiniest bird which will try to defend its nest against the eagle at the cost of its life; and it is this parental love, which is one of the general phenomena of life, which is a proof to us of the existence of God. This parental passion or love runs through man, animals, birds, even down to insects; for we see insects depositing their larvæ at the risk of their lives in the nest of other insects

PLATO

or animals. How can it be otherwise than wonderful this world filled with parental love ! What is it ? It is love of immortality ; it is not the love of this child or that, it is the perpetuation of that genus we call humanity.

When we have travelled we see all sorts of parents ; in each country parental love is of a different kind. In the author's own travels he has seen how very different it is, and how much it varies. It is another and a great form of love, the love of thinking that through that child one is perpetuated ; that through that child one's life is likely to be re-incarnated. It is immortality, for we think that we go on for ever in our descendants. We will try and make a scale of parental love from its highest and deepest to its lowest form. If we were to try and discover which is that mother who loves her child more than any other mother does, we will find that it is the Zingaree or gypsy mother. If we have not seen her as a mother, we cannot imagine what she is, her wealth of love, her passion with which she will address her child and which she expresses in her own language, a kind of Hindustani ; she loves every hair of its head, every nail on its fingers. The child may be an infant, or two or five years old, it is most wonderful music with which she talks to that child ; and this passion continues for years and years. It is such ecstasies of love, that it would be impossible for any modern

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

poet to describe such love as that. She will roll it about, play to it, caper to it, amuse it in every way, sing to it, play the violin to it. It is an enormous physical force she devotes to it, and never seems to get tired of doing it. We never see this in civilized countries. To the Zingaree the child is her world, her only country ; and all her love is centred in that child ; all besides is nothing to her.

Next to her comes the Jewish mother, by this we mean the orthodox Jewish mother of Poland. For it is known that there is a marked distinction between Jews who are orthodox, and those who are not ; the orthodox look upon their religion as the only true one, and all the rest who are not orthodox are considered as heathens. It is truly wonderful to see such a Jewish mother play with her child and amuse it. Her actions are not so intense as those of the Zingaree we have just described, but it is still astounding. It is nothing to her that there are other mothers ; her child is the one, the sum of her life. At Brody, at Lemberg, in Galicia, we will see this. A girl is about fifteen or sixteen when she is married, but her husband does not exist for her when she becomes a mother, the world around her does not exist ; it is only her child baby she cares for, and she knows it by heart, this is her life, her love. This extraordinary love exists not only amongst the Zingaree and the Jews, but also amongst the Poles, the

PLATO

Czechs and the Irish, people who are under the bondage of more powerful nations. In all these nations they have no fatherland of their own and they hate the country they belong to, so they concentrate all their affections on the child; their country is their child. And for the same reason we find that the Irish women are the most virtuous in the world; in Ireland we find the smallest number of illegitimate births, much as the Irish women are endowed by nature with extraordinary charm and beauty, and therefore the more likely to go wrong. And it is no wonder that we find it so, because they are so motherly and fond of their family, and with them it is a fearful crisis to go wrong. The Zingaree woman too, in Hungary, has never been known to fail. She is a *force majeure*, being very beautiful, and well-developed, and exposed to wonderful temptations, but she never yields to passion because for her there is something behind, she must belong one day to one alone, her child, and her child will be her empire; and it is for the child's sake she will never fail. Amongst the orthodox Polish Jewesses there may have been cases of failing, but they are exceedingly rare; with them the seventh commandment is rarely transgressed; with them, too, it is none other but the child. These are the extreme cases we have to consider in the first stage or scale, where parental love is of the deepest kind, where the

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

child is the country, is everything the mother cares for ; and she naturally cares not for Europe, the state, the world.

In the next stage is the Italian woman. To her, her *bambino* is not exactly her only thing, but it is a little more than it is in England. She will talk to it, and amuse it with silly nonsense, expressing herself in language we could not understand. This parental love is more strong and intellectual in France, but it is very feeble in England. Without any intention of being disagreeable, it is at the same time not an agreeable task to tell mothers that they are not what they ought to be. But here in England children are sent away at ten years of age, away from the loving tenderness of home life, and thus the hearts of the children are stifled.

In an Empire like this a woman counts for little. In America it is even worse, for there, beyond the fact that a woman becomes a mother, she is of no importance whatever as far as her child is concerned. She does not exist, nor can it be otherwise. The mother has no influence, she is not needed. It is her country she lives for, and knows no child ; the reverse of what we saw with the Zingaree mother, who knows her child, but no country. It is their overpowering country that becomes a power and force behind the Americans, so the mother becomes superfluous beyond the act of giving existence to the child. She is not

PLATO

required, a case of "needn't apply here, no point in her," is what they say; whereas maternal love is the love of immortality, and is caused by something beyond us; we cannot resist it, it is too strong for us. It is an absolutely certain fact that maternal love is dictated by a force behind us that is greater than we are, and if that is not enough, let us add our historical conditions, and we will find that we must be compelled to act under that force. The Jewish mother may come and ask, "Am I right in keeping my child away from outside influences?" The answer is that she is not right, because it indicates that she does not love her own country. Though she may speak the language all right, still to her it is not her country. In America it is the reverse. They love their country; it is their one great passion; they have a wonderful system of education, and by that system the love of country eats up all the rest. With them the love of immortality is the immortality of America. They hate children, and do not want to be mothers; but want to have a good time. Well, they will see what will come of it, and their own President, who is a great man, President Roosevelt, told them so, he told them it meant ruination to them, the decadence of their country. In America we have the other extreme of the Zingaree woman.

However, in a philosophical lecture we must be careful to distinguish between degrees; there

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

is not only one kind of parental love, but several degrees of it, and we must find the *juste milieu*, the golden mean. To find the right thing, however, is very difficult. It is not right to think that our system in England is the best. The author has handled over two thousand young Englishmen, and he can say that he found that what they needed, what they had missed, was maternal love. He had once in his house a young man who was very ill, indeed, very nearly dying, and he was getting worse. He said to him, "Look here, my dear X——, where is your mother, why does she not write to me?" His answer, a very striking one, was, "She respects herself far too much to interfere in my affairs." There we have the crux of English life. There is no need for us to go to the extreme of the Zingaree women, but we ought to do a little better, something better than the American. The mothers of this country do need to exercise a larger influence over their children. They will then help to keep this great nation what it should be. They will make heroes of their men. The man who has had the most cuddling, the most kisses, and the most of a mother's love and tenderness, that is the man who will make a great hero. It is the women who make the men. The man who has not had all this will get tired of a battle-field in half an hour. We know that the Irish have always made the best heroes. Why? Because

PLATO

they are greatly addicted to women, and are as tender as a flower at home. There is, too, England's greatest hero, Nelson. He was frantic about woman, and there would have been no Nelson, no Trafalgar, without Lady Hamilton. He was as delicate and tender to her as he could be; but to his enemies he was as hard as he was delicate to her. If women thought more of being true women there would be greater heroes. Heroes are men who have been loved by their mothers, kissed by them to any extent. It is not enough for sons to have a kiss now and again, they should be kissed all day, five hundred, five thousand kisses; and on the battlefield he will kill five thousand of his enemies. He will be like Achilles, who was the terror of the Trojans. Napoleon cried like a child'; he always was his mother's *bambino*, and he was the terror of all Europe. It is by the mother's tenderness that she will make heroes. Let her not be afraid of showing it, it is all nonsense for her to think that by doing so she will make him effeminate. Let us, therefore, finally decide, in showing maternal love, neither to go to the excess of the Zingaree woman, nor to the other extreme of the American mother, but let us do something, do what is in our power, to combine both.

It is necessary, too, for the mother not to keep her son too long with her, like the Jewish mother in Austria. She wants to dominate him,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

and does do it, when he is twenty-five. And so it is with the French mother ; they go too far. In France, *Madame* will dominate her son until he is thirty-five, and this is the opposite extreme. All this requires pondering over with the greatest of earnestness. We are dealing with immortality ; and when dealing with immortality we ought to conquer ourselves. What is required is not to do too much, and at the same time not to do too little, but surely a mother has the right to say that her son ought to belong to her till he is sixteen. What is it that the English mother does ? She sends him away to a public school when he is ten. Now that, assuredly, is wrong. When a mother does not exercise her maternal influence over him how can he be expected to keep straight ? One of the great evils of the English public schools comes from the lack of this maternal influence. It is maternal tenderness the boy wants, and when he cannot get it, he has it from another boy or a silly schoolmaster ; thus he loses love paternal and maternal ; the love of immortality *par excellence*. We ought to consider these differences.

Why should not the influence of the mother extend to the age of fifteen or sixteen ? It is this which causes so many to marry women older than themselves, and this is unnatural. A young man, when he is twenty or twenty-five, comes and says he is going to marry, to marry a girl eight or ten years older than he is, but she is such a sweet

PLATO

girl. And why does he do this? Because he has never been satisfied by the love of a mother, and he wants some one older than himself to give him that love. The mother not having done her duty, she lets him go, and so he goes astray. The author knew twelve or fourteen young men, and ten of them married women older than themselves. It is a common saying that this great subject cannot be talked about in public, but it can be stated without fear of contradiction that what has been said here is the truth, God's own truth. In dealing with their sons, mothers ought to be able to say that they want them to enter that temple of Love's immortality; and so to attach them to themselves rather than to the silly schoolmasters. This is a great matter for the mothers to think about in this country, where paternal love is not what it ought to be. But in the interests of English imperialism it is necessary not to over-do it like the Zingaree, the Jewess, and perhaps the Italian and the French woman. With them, their excesses, their going to extremes, is the secret cause of their slow development; and no more must the English go to the other extreme of the Spartan, whose children were sacrificed to the State. In what did the Spartans ever excel? They had fine muscular fellows, yes, but they did nothing else; no, Sparta could never become an all-round State. In England we might surely come to some understanding in dealing with boys.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

They should be kept at home till they are twelve or fourteen. A boy should not be sent to a public school till he is fourteen, and until he is sixteen he should come home every evening. A mother should not be afraid to kiss him and love him, and to call him by nonsensical names, and so to attach him to her. She is afraid he will not be a man, but in this she is wrong. He will then be a man, and a stronger and a braver and a better man. Wellington, for instance, loved nobody ; perhaps there was a Fanny, a nobody ; and he was not within ten thousand miles of Nelson. If we compare the two, we can tell which was the real man.

It is a mistake to give in to the silly notions of the schoolmasters. It is a known fact that at English public schools, at Eton and Harrow, boys are in many cases ashamed to put up on the walls of their rooms the photographs of their mothers. Should such a thing be ? and who is responsible for it but their own mothers ? England will have terrible wars some day, and she will want heroes, she will want enormous men, men as great as Nelson. It is not predicted that she will be beaten in the wars that are coming, she will repair the mischief, but she will want great heroes, perhaps even greater than Nelson ; and such men she will never get unless the mothers exert their influence over their boys, unless they love them all they can, keep them with them as much as they can till they are fourteen and sixteen. We must,

PLATO

therefore, decide here to do that something that will render us happy ; but to ignore that something, to see our boy once, or perhaps two or three times a year, that is clearly not right ; it is assuredly the wrong thing that is being done for this country.

Thus we have come to some practical results. It is no small thing, no mere "titillation of our senses ;" it is something deeper than what Spinoza says ; it is no enjoying of the material or sensual pleasures of our present life ; it is, indeed, the seeking after immortality. Let us do what ought to be done ; let us find the *juste milieu*, not like the Zingaree, or the Italian or the French, not like the American at the other extreme ; but let us have a certain medium. We want heroes who are tender and delicate ; kiss them when they are young, let them cry. A hero is like a thinker, he needs a heart ; all courage comes from the heart ; and he who cries best, fights the best. Take the Irish heroes, none are more charming than they are, the *charmeur des charmeurs*, and they are the terror of all terrors to their enemies. Like Condé, for instance, writhing at one time on the ground because he had lost his love ; and a few weeks later, winning his great battle of Rocroy that saved France. Let us take a leaf out of the book of some other countries ; let us see what the Jewess mother has done, what the French, the Italian, the American has done ; and let us consider

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

what their action has led to in those other countries, and the English will have no difficulty in deciding what is best for their own country. And it cannot be stated too emphatically that it is all in the hands of mothers, that it is not only our own generation that they have to think of, but they have to think of ensuing generations for their country's sake. They should remember always what is the most beautiful thing of all, that the end and aim of all love is Immortality.

CHAPTER VII

WE have come now to another section of our great subject which, strange to say, is not dealt with in any part of Plato's works. There is love for the highest, or God; love for the next highest, the love of country, or as we call it, patriotism; these he does not touch on. The third part of the subject, love of science, or philosopher's love he has dealt with largely. When Plato deals with this subject his ideas will be found to be so different from ours that they will need modification. It is not only important to follow carefully what he does say, but it is also important to note what he does not say.

In the Symposium, old and experienced men met, they were great tragedians, great philosophers, great politicians, the flower of the age. Men such as Pausanias and Phædros, Aristophanes, and Socrates, met and talked about love, and took it in every possible aspect, each person looking at it from a different point of view, but we never find them speaking of the love of country. Though the Greeks were deeply immersed in love of their country, they never speak

THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

of it. And as for the word "patriotism," it is not in their language, the word being neither Greek nor Latin, but is made up partly of one and partly of the other, being coined by later writers. Patriotism was with them an every-day natural fact, like eating and drinking, and so they did not talk about it; and that is why Plato never mentions it. It was afterwards, and under altered circumstances, that love of country in its modern aspect became one of the most passionate of loves, so passionate that it frequently drove men to extremes.

We find that in the Symposium the Greeks meet with the set intention to talk of love, to talk of Eros in all its aspects, and we have a series of men and they take it in turns to discuss it, each viewing it from a separate aspect, and then we find Socrates winding up the whole discussion with his speech. And in all this we never read of the strongest of loves, the love of God, ever mentioned. Now, with all of us, whether we consult our hearts, or our confessors, it cannot be denied that the love of God comes first as the source of all other love. We find St. Bernard saying that the love of God, and the power to love God, come from God himself. It is a peculiar sentiment which we can neither realize nor can we articulate. It means that that love must come from something bigger, something much vaster than ourselves. Some of our greatest thinkers,

PLATO

Spinoza for instance, devotes very much time to this, and he goes on to say that if a man loves God he cannot even attempt to be loved back by him. There is a famous passage too in Goethe which says the same thing ; but he applies it to a woman, to whom he says, *wenn Ich dich liebe, was gehts dich an?* " If I love you that has nothing to do with you." That is, perhaps, the other extreme. We love God because we cannot help loving him. Spinoza and Plato both characterize such love as the strongest of loves, though Plato never dwells on it at length. We have a passage too in Aristotle, where he says that love created the world out of love for the world. Plato also says that the gods were so fond of beauty that they created the world out of love for beauty ; to feast their eyes on the many beautiful things around them. We devote no end of attention to this love of God, we think it the centre of all love. Not only do we think of it when we go to church, when we go to our confessions, but we feel this love in us when we love wife, or father, or mother, or country. It is not sufficient for us to restrict this love in any way, we thirst for the love of the Infinite, the love of God. If such is our feeling in modern times, it will be said that what ancient history teaches us is that the love of the ancients was based on the love of the finite, that it was altogether restricted. And so it is, their love was restricted.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

It was after the fall of the Roman Empire that these restrictions were loosened and they wanted something immense ; they wanted God. And all through mediæval history this will be found exemplified in Frenchmen and in the Crusaders. If the French had been asked why they did not drive out the English from France, why they did nothing for their country ? they would say, "No, let us leave France to take care of herself, let us go to Palestine to fight for the tomb of the Saviour." Such was the intense feeling that seized hold of the people, so unpractical, so pointless, that we find that great Crusader, Godfrey de Bouillon, saying, "France is not my country, my country is the universe." Now, with us it is the other extreme ; patriotism is so strong in us that we will not go out of our way to defend God's tomb ; and so the idea of God, the love of God has become much weaker in us.

Are we to be encouraged in thus going to extremes in what we might say are vague things, or must we, like the Greeks, moderate our ideas ? The Spartans loved Sparta, and did not trouble about other countries. We, on the other hand, send out our missionaries to convert nations for the love of humanity. Such an idea would have seemed absurd to the Greeks ; they would have said they had nothing to do with the people of Asia and Africa, who might be let alone to love

PLATO

their own country. To send missionaries to convert people, the Greeks could not see that ; that is another kind of love which they did not understand. And the ancient Hebrews were the same in that respect.

It is so difficult to say the Greeks were wrong. Any man who has studied these people, their surroundings and the rich abundant life they led, would find it extremely difficult to say that these people were mistaken in the views they held. Let us look at the matter, too, from the other side ; from the side of him who says, "Surely the life of the negro is not the proper life to lead, and I must go and see what I can do to help him." Can we then deny our admiration for so many Catholic orders, the Capuchins, the Jesuits, and others, sending out men at the risk of their lives to impart to other people who were not so favourably situated, the great idea of God ? Can we say that such and such a person who gave up his life in the cause was an ass or a fool for doing it ? No, we can do nothing of the kind.

Well, we turn to Plato and say, " You never teach in your writings that any one should be converted, you never tell us that the love of God must be imparted to others. With you everybody that is not a Greek is a barbarian. Are you right ? We cannot help thinking you are wrong." Well, there is no doubt, and it is with reluctance we admit it that the idea of the love of God was

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

pushed to grotesque extremes in the Middle Ages, and from these came the crusades and inquisitions, those excesses and excrescences which grew round the main fundamental idea. But the bottom, the foundation of the idea is right. Surely we ought to make a propaganda of the love of God; and Plato in this was mistaken. There is a book of a German writer who is almost unknown, a German of the Old Catholics, named Michelis, though it is not written in very good German, yet it is the deepest thing ever written on Plato. He admires Plato, but he says Plato has not seen the force of the love of God. Even if we grant that monasticism is wrong, we cannot help feeling that the Catholic Church is right in having taken upon itself to teach the love of God to all humanity. And whether we be Catholics or Protestants, and the latter have even more missionaries, we do realize the Infinite. We all believe in that one love of God, and technically it is the love of infinitude. Spinoza says in his writings that the Infinite is not negative, but positive; it is the finite that is negative; and that we must love something that is infinite. And so it is that the strongest love of woman is the love of immortality—it is infinitude.

Alas! there are many here and in America who say, "Why take these things so seriously, for, after all, love is of an ending thing;" women, for instance, who say they do not want a child.

PLATO

Let it be emphatically stated again that this is not so; the love of the father, or of the mother, for a child, or of the statesman who procreates a State, is the love of immortality. A bachelor is condemned before all the world. He has not solved the problem of life or of love. Schopenhauer never felt love, Spinoza never felt it. They saw some aspects of love, but when they came to love itself, they went astray. The story that Spinoza loved the daughter of his teacher is exploded, for he suffered from a terrible malady which precluded all thoughts or possibility of marriage, and he loved nobody. Yet he constantly speaks of love in his Ethics; he says he thinks there is only one love, and that is the love of God. We might venture to say that love proper, whether it be directed to God, or woman, or child, or country, or to glory, or to ambition, are one and the same thing; it is the one oceanic passion that defies death. The burden of the song is the same; it is the same negation of death. "I don't want to die; I don't want to decay." As Horace so well puts it, *non omnis moriar*; "As long as the vestal virgins will go up the steps of the Capitol, so long will they sing my odes." And he was right; for to this day these odes of Horace are known all over the world. It is this feeling of immortality that causes love, and when we differentiate and speak of God as something special, we must not think

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

it is the only love. All love is the same, and from one source. So it is that Spinoza was wrong when he speaks of one and only love—that of God; and Plato was wrong never to speak of the love of God with much insistence.

Now we come to the love of country, and it is startling to find that Plato never speaks of it at all. In the Symposium there were six persons who talked about love. These men were the pick of Greek culture, and yet they never speak of the love of country. With us in modern times patriotism is one of the strongest of passions, and it was even so with the Greeks. At the sound of it all, our nature is completely changed; we get a cruel person out of a sweet woman; a bold man out of a coward; a generous person where he was niggardly. And to do all that, it must be a great and strong and intense passion. Charlotte Corday, who was so gentle that she could not kill a chicken, yet found courage to rid her country of the monster Marat by stabbing him in his bath. Even with people who are so afraid of death, of the hereafter in fact, it is wonderful to see what an incredible change comes over them under the spell of patriotism. A man who will not venture out in a street brawl for fear of risking his skin, will go smiling to certain death because it is for the sake of his country. The love of country must thus be an 'exceedingly strong love. Women who have been so mean as not to spend a farthing more

PLATO

than they could help, have been known to give their jewels, their last bracelet, for their country. Men who were butts for cowardice have become heroes. Surely Plato might have talked about such a passion. What is such love as this? and why does Plato not say a word about it? It is because in Greece, to talk about the love of one's country appeared altogether superfluous. It was a foregone conclusion with them that they did love their country; or as they put it, we live in the State, through the State and by the State, and there is no other life for us.

It is because we do not live as the Greeks did, that we are astounded by the love of country, and it raises in us that intense passion for it. There is one word that is hated in this country, and that is conscription. It is incredible that the English should be so averse to it. What does conscription mean? It means that one is eventually forced to die for one's country. If a man does not want to die for it, the object of his love, it is pretty certain that he never loved it. Love, let us remember, is absolute; it has no conditions, and it exacts complete surrender, just as, in the Catholic Church, a man is told that he must give up the world to go into a monastery. That is quite right, if one wants to make a specialty of the love of God, one must go to a monastery. This was what Spinoza did, and he was called a God-intoxicated man. All this is perfectly logical, not only with the love

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

of God, but with every sort of love. And if we have love of country we must give up everything for it; if one is not willing to do this, *vous ne l'aimez pas, vous badinez.* This was as true in Plato's time as it is to-day; that in things absolute there are no conditions. If time has no limit, no more has infinite Love. In connection with conscription the people of this country say they do not want to serve in the army; they are horrified at the idea of shedding blood. Why, their empire was founded in blood; and if they do not want to fight for it then it is clear that they do not love it. Love of this kind is unconditional even in the smallest animals. Look at the little bird that defends its nest. The eagle or the falcon may tear it to shreds but it will fight to the last; it thinks of no conscription, but its impulse is to fight first, and what is this love but absolute love. It is not possible to believe that Englishmen love their country, unless they mean to fight for it; and the love of country is as absolutely unconditional as the love of God, as the love of the parent for the child. If people do not want to die for their country, then they should go away from it, go away to South America, to foreign colonies, to Madagascar, they are not Englishmen. It is horrid this love of country, to have to die for it; yes, and so is it horrid to owe money, to be ill, to be bored; but if people really have the love of country they must do as with the

PLATO

love of God. The only people who loved God were the Catholic monks, and they carried it out to the last point. We may not agree with St. Bernard of Clairvaux, with St. Bonaventura or St. Francis d'Assissi, but the impression of these men was something full, round, and complete. They were as Hero and Leander, as Romeo and Juliet, ready to die for their love; for they really meant to do it, and this impresses us as all great things must. Now with most people they do not mean to do it.

The love of country is the greatest historical and political force we have to deal with in modern times. The Greeks had small States, but now our States are great, and the more intense becomes this passion. Let us then promote that passion as we ought to do. In Germany, where they hate this country, there it will be found that they cultivate this love. But it must be unconditional and altruistic; and of the truth, the absolute truth of this, there is no question. We cannot now love God as they did in the Middle Ages, but that love we show now in a different aspect, in the love of our country.

In the times of the Greeks, woman was altogether a secondary consideration, and they never spoke of the love of a woman; we find nothing about it in Plato, nor is there any mention of it in the Eleusinian mysteries. There is an old treatise by a Spartan about their State, and yet not a word

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

is said in it about that love of a woman. Do we not know that the deeper a love is the less we speak about it? We speak of things that are indifferent, but when we feel intensely we never utter a word. The father who loves his children never speaks about the love, it is too deep, like the depth of the ocean; there are no waves on it, but a wonderful and deep silence over all. And so it is why Plato never talks about it, because passion in the Greeks was stronger than anything else, and it would have been superfluous to mention it. An Athenian would as a matter of course die for Athens, a Corinthian would at once lay down his life for Corinth. To philosophize on such a matter seemed so silly; we might as well philosophize on the eyes, the ears, and nose. Not speaking about the thing proves that it is the deepest of all passions. We cannot all go and devote our lives to the love of God; that is set apart for the blessed, for the privileged few. In the hustle of our modern life it is impossible that we should; for unless we devote our entire lives to it, it becomes impossible. But the love of country is a different love. In America it is the all-absorbing passion; and there is no love of man, wife, child, or anything. It is what the monks did for their great love; they gave up mother, brothers, sisters; and it was St. Bernard who said, "You must walk over your mother's grave to get into my monastery; you must love God and drop everything else." It is

PLATO

exactly so with the American. We are a gigantic country, they say, and we have an infinite love for our country ; that country is too immense to allow us to have two loves ; all our care is for one thing, America, which is our great absorbing love. Every American, therefore, goes on his knees before America like as the monk goes on his knees before God. Why ? Because he cares for no woman or child ; no, his God is America. St. Francis well puts it that God loved him, and he loved God ; and that is precisely the feeling with the American. If a man cannot get the object of his love it is better that he should go and commit suicide.

And now we come to the love of science, the love of thought, and there are very few people who care for this love. It is with this aspect of love that Socrates winds up his speech in the Symposium. We find some of the phenomena of this love to be absolute, unconditional, cruel and all-absorbing. It is like the cruel, egotistic individuality in Faust, where he wants to know the essence, the ideas of things ; it is a passion for knowledge, to know what holds the world. To love like this one must sell one's self to the devil ; there must be no obstacles of any kind. It is not necessary to love like that ; not even like the men, for instance, in Hungary in '48, '49, who said to their wives we know you will be beggars if we go and fall, but we must fight. And they did, and left their families absolute beggars. This is

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

what may be called the love of country unconditional, the love of glory ; and the love of intellectual glory, the love of science and of thought, is equally unconditional.

The Greeks said there were two kinds of love ; one they called celestial love, and the other, vulgar love. What Plato calls real love is celestial love, but let us not think that by this he means that it is a different kind of love. It is the same as the other kinds, unconditional and cruel. Let us look at Faust, first he sells himself to the devil, then he meets a girl and ruins her, he then goes from crime to crime, until he kills her own brother, and crushing his way to ruin in pursuit of his passion he touches the deepest depths of infamy. Then there is Don Juan, that type of vulgar love of pleasure. The Venus vulgar ruled him, and he does everything until he spells rack and ruin around him, and then goes down to hell. Love absolute is a tragedy, whether it be of God, or country, or woman, or child, or anything. Fortunately very few people are capable of love of this description. As to love of science or knowledge, the author may be permitted to say with regret that, though he has been more or less in the teaching line for years, he has never yet found a young man who was really filled with the thirst for knowledge. They are eager to know enough to pass an examination or to shine in society, but as to that demoniacal thirst for knowledge, of which

PLATO

Socrates speaks, he has never found one that had it. Perhaps it is good that it is so, for it ruins like any other passion. It is, in fact, a tragedy, and to be a Faust one must go to the devil. In English literature there is a book called "Eugene Aram." If read carefully it will be found to be infinitely more than an ordinary novel. He is the Faust of English literature. He wanted to know, but it was not for money; and he became a murderer and sold himself to the devil. There is also that terrible story of Palissy's last bedstead, which he threw into the fire to discover his enamel, to know the chemical substances of which enamel was composed. He died a beggar. Galois died when he was young; he was a wonderful mathematician who was not known, but he wanted to know, and he has left but sixty pages, and these pages are now immortal. Mary Somerville too, and that French woman Sophie Germain, who nearly exasperated her family because she wanted to know. Anybody then who loves must be prepared for a tragedy; to love absolutely can lead to nothing else. That is what is meant by the envy of the gods. "You want to love," they say; "no, it cannot be, that is for us, for the immortals; if you meddle with that you perish." It is the story of one of the famous dukes in England, who met a poor man with the gout. "Gout," said His Grace; "won't rheumatism do for you? Gout is aristocratic."

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

We are now in a position to approach the subject of love for man as held by the Greeks. They had the real love of man for man ; sympathy with them meant absolute friendship. It was this love which inspired that Theban band who fell to a man at the battle of Chæronea. In this there is something infinitely deeper than anything we will find in Schopenhauer, it is really love. Friendship, then, is the one love that mortals can indulge in without risk. We cannot love God, as we have seen, without walking over graves ; love of country means we must go to the wars with a smile on our lips ; all these loves lead to tragedies ; but this one sort of love may be allowed to mortals without being tragical. In Plato, then, love means the love of man for man, the love of Plato for Socrates, or of Damon for Pericles. It was this deep intense love which made the man of Megara go to Athens to sit and listen to Plato. Such love in these days is the rarest, absolutely the rarest thing in the world. In history we rarely meet with it, in practical life, never.

Friendship, then, is the one love which is not only eternal and unconditional, but it is absolutely pure. It is what we mean when we talk of Platonic love. It is the glory of Goethe that he not only wrote about, but he really created friendship. Witness the relation between Goethe and Schiller, between Shelley and Byron. Byron was

PLATO

imbued with the Greek spirit and he loved Shelley more than women. Here we have something pure without its being tragical ; and of this sort of love we see in Plato very much. In these days we would be almost annoyed, we would treat with contempt, if any one spoke of the love of man for man. The Greeks, however, knew the meaning of it ; in everything they did they tried to reach the height of perfect art. They tried also to reach perfection in love, and their experience taught them that it could not be attained in the love of man and woman ; in that there was tragedy. It was, indeed, more likely that perfection was to be found in friendship than in love of man and woman.

Woman has not kept pace with our historical development. She is in the thirteenth century, while man is in the twentieth. Perhaps there will be another phase of development which will bring her more into line in the future. Now, we do not quite see why we waste so many words on a love which is quite indifferent to them, that is, love which is not tragical, between man and man. Has such a love ever been known between woman and woman ? We may say that there is no example of it in history. Love is certainly the great *loupos, appetitus*, the desire for immortality. It is the desire for infinitude, no matter what the object ; and that desire is somewhat presumptuous on the part of mortals, and likely

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

to end tragically. The Greeks thought, therefore, that it was better not to have such a love, but that they ought to be satisfied with some of the minor aspects of it. They knew, too, that this world could not go on very long with mediocrities ; so they with their intense life wanted to be like Pericles, like Socrates. It was too much, it could not be, and so they disappeared, and like flowers they have left their perfume behind them. Their ideals were not for large countries and empires, not for millions of people, but for small States. Let gigantic empires try for mediocrities because they cannot hope to reach infinitude. Our life, indeed, is not meant to be lived as the life of immortals. We will find love in a poem, or in music, or in art, when we cannot find it in life. The unrequited lover writes the best. We know of the jilted lover, the man who wrote the sonnets of Petrarch in such beautiful sonorous language ; he, too, could not get at his ideal, for Aphrodite eluded him. After all the greatest lesson of philosophy is humility. If we cannot climb up to the top of Olympus we can at least have our breakfast at the foot of it.

Love is an immense subject, and it is a risky thing. If a man does not find it when he is a lover of a woman, he will find it as a father. What is King Lear ? There we have the deep passion of a father. He will find out what love is, that it is a cruel thing they call Aphrodite;

PLATO

he will not find it out in the way of science, but he will in his own child. We find it in "Père Goriot," by Balzac, where we see a type of this. Love and everything connected with it is dangerous. The Greeks went to the temple of the goddess and kissed the stone; this is a terrible goddess, they said, it is best to be humble, and not to expect too much. Napoleon was never loved by wife, brothers, or sisters; they did not believe in him, not even his wife; and he was burning to be loved. The Greeks would have said to him you have conquered the world, you cannot conquer love as well; the gods are too envious, be humble and do not try to get too much. Such things are very rare, let us not try to become Dr Faust. The love of woman is a desperate tragedy, we cannot know very much of it, and it will make us as bitter as possible.

There is a legend of the statue of the goddess Isis in Egypt. That statue was always veiled over with a white cloth, and it was said that whoever saw that statue would see truth. A young man was determined to lift the veil, and one night he ventured to go near and to touch the cloth aside, and the next morning they found him dead there by the statue. He had seen truth, and he could not live. And so it is with every object of love; it teaches us humility. Fontenelle, who lived to be a hundred, said, "If I held truth in my hand, I should never open my

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

hand." We cannot all be like St. Francis. Only just a part of love is for us ; full love, full truth, is only for the gods. If we can enjoy love, only a few sparks of it, that will do for us. If we want to take it in stronger doses we must be ready to take the tragical consequences ; and if we are not ready, we deceive ourselves, and we also deceive others. This is what we wanted to arrive at in this chapter, that the love of father for child, man for country, of man for knowledge, often ends in tragedy, so let us not seek to desire too much. In the next chapter we will discuss the love of man to woman proper.

CHAPTER VIII

WE have now reached the last chapter of the series in which we are treating of the subject of love. We have dealt with love in several of its aspects ; we have said something of the love of God, the love of children, of country, of knowledge, and we have now reached the concluding aspect, a subject on which the Greeks have never said much, and that is the love of the young man for the young woman. It is the aspect of love of which our modern literature is full nowadays, and yet the Greeks never touched on it. It is characteristic of both Greek and Roman literature, this absence of all elaborate treatment of it, and yet the literature of those ancients was so incomparable that we cannot vie with them ; they have exhausted all subjects except this one.

In fact no language is so perfect as the Greek, so full of expression, so sonorous ; it is the very language to give expression to love. And yet why is it that they are so silent on this one subject, the very topic on which all modern literature is more than explicit ? It has led to so many tragedies, to so much happiness, so much sorrow ;

THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

it is, in fact, bound up completely with our social life in one form or another.

There is a famous reply of a great French lady, a lady seventy years of age, who was asked when woman ceased loving. What she said was, "*Monsieur ! il faut s'adresser aux dames plus vieilles que moi,*" meaning that maturity in love is never reached. We contend, then, that youth cannot appreciate love, for it means immortality, perpetuity, infinitude, and those thoughts are far from youth. The subject indeed is so interesting to us that it naturally strikes us when reading the Greek authors, why they never talk about it. We have Corinna, the Greek poetess of Tanagra, who gained her victory over Pindar at Thebes; there is Sappho herself, in the few poems of hers that we have left to us, and she talks of the love of woman for woman; it is the same with them all, they all refer to other loves, and not to this love of the young man for the young woman; there is only slight indications of it in any of their poets. If we take Homer, what do we find in his Iliad and his Odyssey? The love of Ulysses is based on the love of man for woman, it is that *bourgeois* feeling in Ulysses for his wife. Ulysses goes through innumerable wanderings and temptations; Circes and Calypsos are nothing to him, it is his own wife that he loves, and it is that that endears him to us. In later poetry there are very few indications of such love. We have a sister's and

PLATO

brother's love such as that of Iphigenia and Orestes ; we have the love of a father and daughter as illustrated by the Antigone. In Roman literature too, even in the most intense and deep passages on love, what do we find but the love of Catullus, who loved Lesbia ? She was a married woman; but he loved her intensely, and he died of that love.

But all this is not what we are treating of here, which is the love of a young man for a young woman. On this subject the ancients are silent, and may we not ask why they are silent, why is it that Plato does not speak of it, why is it he thinks it is really not worth mentioning ? Does it not relate to human life, is it not a part of it ? Far be it from us to be cynical in order to be interesting, but it has often occurred to us, is it because it does not exist ? Plato, we might say, you are very interesting, you are very profound, but it seems to us that there is a great deficiency here in your writings. Here is something which occupies so much of the time of the young man and the young girl, and yet you pass over the subject without a word. Surely, you could not have sifted the matter to the foundation, or you would not have ignored a subject which is most interesting to us. The author himself when a young man of twenty-seven or twenty-eight, really thought that Plato had ignored the subject because it had escaped him. But he has travelled

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

since, and he has noticed and studied this and other subjects dealt with by Plato, in all countries, and now he can say that he does not think that Plato was so very much mistaken in his attitude. It is of the true and real that he always speaks, but of this love of the young man and the young girl, he and the Greeks did not think it existed, and so he never mentions it. As we have seen in previous chapters, it is not only from what Plato says that we learn, but also from what he does not say, and we are to infer from this silence of his that there is no such reality in the love we are now discussing.

If we look through history we find it so strange that so many great men have never loved; or some of them only when they were of mature years. The author himself loved Lessing most of all German writers. He thought him the one man who combined in him the greatest forces of the soul. He made a hero of him, he devoured that man, he bought his portraits, one by Tischbein was the best, and he got to know his life very well. He could not help thinking him an exceedingly beautiful man. He followed him from town to town in his career, from Leipsic to Berlin, from Berlin to Breslau, and he never found a woman who loved him. And when he arraigned Plato in his mind for his great deficiency in ignoring this phase of love, he could not help thinking why was Lessing never loved? True he

PLATO

was *fiancé* to a woman, a widow, who kept him going for six years ; she could never have loved him for keeping him waiting all that time. How could she ? She loved her first husband and his honour more, thus she did not love Lessing, for with love one must go to the end of a thing, one wants to possess ; and if a person waits six years or even two years, that person cannot love at all. The author, therefore, hated that woman with a posthumous jealousy, for she never loved Lessing, and he never loved that woman ; and when a son was born to him at the age of forty-seven, he wrote that famous letter in which he said, "I have wanted to be like other men, but it could not be for me." "*Ich wollte es auch einmal so haben wie andre Menschen, aber es ist mir schlecht bekommen.*" Nor does it mean much what Goethe says on the subject, as he was never loved when young. If Frederica had loved him, it was only biscuit love, something that could be broken very easily, very brittle. And when he left her, she cried a little, a very few tears, and then it was all over.

When we come to this country and look at the lives of her great men, we find Byron very interesting. There are six cantos in *Don Juan* which are incomparable. There is in them the Greek, German, and French spirit all rolled into one, but that man was never loved by a woman. And with such instances before us we can say, perhaps Plato was quite right ; perhaps the love we see so

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

much written about in novels does not exist. The Greeks were terribly cruel, and they were also terribly sincere ; and they were a people who called a spade a spade. These people found out that young girls do not love young men ; what they really do is they love themselves. A young girl only cares *à crever le cœur de l'autre jeune fille !* Or, as the mistress of a girl's institution once said, they love two things, cold beef and to put the knife into the heart of other girls. If then love is such a rare thing, how can we imagine that we can find it in ordinary immature boys and girls who are not yet complete ? So we think that Plato was quite right ; it does not exist, and it is vain to look for a Hero and Leander, or a Romeo and a Juliet from such incomplete material. If it comes, it comes later on, but not at the ages of sixteen and eighteen. The heart must have experienced, must have suffered indeed, before it can know love in its intensity and purity.

Seven-eighths of the marriages in France are *mariage de convenance* ; love does not enter into them ; and we find the importance of Plato just in this, that he is as fertile in what he says as in what he does not say ; and when he does not refer to a thing, it means that it does not exist. That is why it pleases us to read about them like fairy tales ; they are not real, but they please the imagination. Fairies, as we know, are things of the imagination, mysterious, and they certainly do

PLATO

not exist. Sir Thomas Browne says in one of his books in the stately language of the day, over two hundred and fifty years ago, that when he went to a theatre he saw an actor shamming some tragedy, and he wept like a child. Our imagination, then, is the strongest force we have ; it is so to-day when we go to the theatre, and when it comes to the love scene, and the young girl confesses her love for the young man, there is breathless silence. It touches our imagination, but we know it is not the real thing.

It is the modern novelist who has started the idea of the love of the young man for the young girl, simply because it appeals to our imagination. Plato, who was right after all, would have said it does not exist ! He would have said he had never seen it, so why should he write of the non-existent. Our own hearts are the greatest of deceivers, the greatest of ruffians ; and so it is that young girls imagine that they are in love ; they, in fact, suggest it to themselves, and it is all fancy on their part. Max Nordau, a Hungarian writer, has a very interesting chapter in his book called the "Paradoxes," where there is a passage which is very true and very fine. He says that it is said that life reacts on literature, but it is juster to say that literature is reflected in life. The Germans have an excellent word which expresses this, *nachempfinden* ; that is, to try and feel what we have read, to put ourselves in the position of a

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

character in a book, to imitate, for instance, a Faust or a Werther. The author has seen numbers of young men try to imitate Shelley. He has seen in Cambridge, young men try to play Dr. Faust, even with the daughter of their boarding-house lady. This was imitation, they were trying to *nachempfinden* what their imagination had gained from their readings. One young man of Christchurch College, Oxford, told him he loved a girl beyond expression. He retorted that that was too much, surely he might be able to express it. The whole thing was really too hollow, he had had his imagination stirred by reading Keats and Shelley and Goethe, for he knew German very well. He wanted to feel as Faust felt when he met Gretchen outside the church, in the hour of his triumph, when he said, "Here, my Gretchen, might I offer you my arm." There is the story, too, of how Goethe met a young man who had read Werther and was imitating him; Goethe kept his identity a secret, and tried to point out to him that suicide was wrong, was morbid, and all for imagination. Thus we see that it is not literature which is always the reflex of life; but that life is frequently the reflex of literature.

The Greeks, in their cruel sincerity, did not believe in all these things, and they only wrote of the real and what they felt was true. The social intercourse in those days was very charming. Athens, Thebes, Megara, Sparta all had their

PLATO

types. In Thebes they danced together, men and women. In Athens, though they did not dance together, they mixed freely. They saw all the intensity of life around them, but the one thing love, they did not see ; and their philosophers tell us the truth about love, that it is almost impossible for it to be found in such ages as those of a young boy and a young girl. It is such a serious thing, so grave, something meaning immortality, infinite, that at the age of a boy and a girl they are too selfish, too egotistic, to have an idea of what love is. It leads to the greatest of pleasures, the greatest of solicitudes for others, it is in fact altogether altruistic, and how can we attain to all this when we are so young ?

So we see why Plato, if he had read our novels, would have called them vapid. Now, ancient Egypt had thousands of novels, and they read as if they were written but yesterday ; for they contain the same old story of the love of a young man and a young woman. The Greeks knew of all that, and we see Greek writers giving their contents and making fun of them ; they said they were made up of mere imagination, of fancy, and did not touch the nerve of life. The Greeks had their novels after the second century b.c., when their artistic sense had long been spent and disappeared. When, in fact, they were a decadent nation that they gave us their novels. We, on the other hand, think that our novel is the

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

modern epic. How mistaken we are, and how many years do we lose of our life in reading them ! All this is totally wrong, and it misleads many young minds, for they feed their imagininations and not their hearts, and it is from the heart that greatness comes. This may be a subject which is painful, but when we are seeking truth it must be mentioned, otherwise the whole truth cannot be explained. We cannot doubt for one moment that the real cause of there being such a large number of old spinsters, both here and in America, is due very much to present-day novels. In America, where there are two millions more men than women, we would expect to find very few old spinsters, but seven-eighths of the women over forty will be found unmarried, and why ? Their President Roosevelt, and excepting Abraham Lincoln, he is, perhaps, the greatest of their Presidents, in his sincerity and his straightforwardness, put his finger on the spot, their one great fault, when he said to the women of America, " You do not want to be mothers, and unless you do you cannot hope to form a nation."

The one great cause of all this is that the modern young girl reads too many novels. She reads so much of this sort of thing, that her head becomes full of imagination, and she sees nothing but ideal men. When she comes down *terre à terre*, into the street, and there sees the ordinary commonplace man, she does not like him ; he is

PLATO

very different from her ideal, and so she will not marry. The French girls, it may be said, are not allowed to read novels, and the French are absolutely right. Here, in England, we buy novels for a penny—those dreadful “Penny Novels”—and they have done more harm to England than anything else. They are absolutely unnatural, and depict life, as it were, completely out of gear. It is after the reading of such trash, where the smallest personage is a countess or a duchess, that the young girl meets a man whom she finds not equal to her ideal, so she refuses to marry him.

Other well-known novels, again, ought to be forbidden, quarantined ; they are a perfect plague. They nourish ideas that do not exist, and give the young women, from servant girls upwards, entirely wrong ideas. Who ever heard of a child like that, having doubts on theological problems, found no other way out but that of committing suicide ? The thing is not real, it is too absurd, too morbid. Such authors are like Don Quixote ; they are fighting windmills instead of fighting heroes. Let us then give our young people something to read that will form their ideas, and not something that will fire their imaginations. We are not now speaking from theory, but from concrete experience, having seen life in all its aspects, not only on the Continent, but in America as well. In France, if a girl is

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

inclined that way, they put her in a nunnery, and that is the best way of disposing of her, and the quickest; but to fill her imagination with things that are not real, that are not love, that, we say, is distinctly wrong.

It is the same with the young man in Germany with his senseless ideas about woman; he will be shocked at seeing his lady-love eating a peach. Now, is not this absolutely morbid? And such are the ideas which are engendered by the class of literature which we call novels; a plague on such literature, for they contain distorted, hybrid ideas of love; and love like this does not exist. Love is, indeed, like truth, like beauty; it is exceedingly rare; and friendship, which is greater, is even rarer. We are not now speaking of a mother's love, that happily is not so rare, though in some countries it is not so strong, but we are speaking solely of love proper, the love of a young man for a young woman, and that is the rarest thing in the world. Do we think it would astound us so much if it were an ordinary thing, like a glass of beer? Do we not, in the theatre, when we see love and warmth of feeling portrayed, listen in breathless silence?

Plato, then, was a thousand times right to avoid such a subject. "Why should I speak of it," he might say, "when it is so rare? I speak of the ordinary occurrences of life, but of love between young men and young women I see no

PLATO

necessity to talk about, as there is no such thing." Among the Greeks, then, we see such love very rarely, but in the Middle Ages there is hardly any trace of it. It is really a disease of modern times; the girl, with fired imagination, going out into the street to meet her ideal. But when we go to the bottom of things, there is really nothing in it. It is quite different when we come to deal with love between mature people. Here it is possible, and it does occur, and when it occurs it may turn out to be a paradise, or it may turn out a hell; for love without realization is hell.

And in this phase of love, history does not leave us in the lurch, but we have great examples of it. There was Horace Walpole, a man of the world and of great charm, who fell in love with a woman, Madame Du Deffand, who was sixty-five and much older than himself, and blind besides, and he loved her passionately. She, of course, could not see him, but he could not help seeing her, that she was no longer young. That is what is called real love, and it may come at any age. Goethe, when he was seventy, was loved for the first time by that Bavarian woman, who wrote that most beautiful amongst his poems. He never said it was hers, but there it is. She loved him with that absolute love which knows no conscience.

We will now give a definition of love, presupposing, of course, that it is between mature

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

people. There may be exceptions, but we hate to believe in exceptions. We give no exceptions, only rules. We say, then, that if there be such a thing as love in real life, it must be between mature people who have known the world; and if they can be united, then paradise is theirs, but if they are not, then it is both paradise and hell; for love, let it be understood, is absolutely unconditional.

We have no explicit passage in Plato on this subject, but his pupil, Xenophon, has a beautiful passage in his *Oīkonomikós* where he describes the love of a mature man for his wife. And it is this that makes the *Odyssey* appeal to us when it shows us the love of Ulysses for his wife, Penelope; he goes through all temptations, all disasters; even the loves of goddesses have no effect on him, and he finally comes back home to his wife. Here we have a most majestic proof of the incomparable beauty of Homer. The author, when young, used to read books to an old man in Vienna, and the books he read to him were law books, of poetry he would not hear. He at last persuaded him to let him read to him the *Odyssey*, and when it came to the twenty-fourth song, which told of the real love of Ulysses for his wife, the old man, a regular dry-as-dust, an old parchment, wept like a child. He said it was all nonsense, but he was overpowered all the same. It struck the author then that Homer was the greatest poet in the world.

PLATO

Imagine that scene when Ulysses comes home to Penelope, and leaning against one of the pillars of his house in an agony of love and longing, he tries to convince his wife of his identity. "I am your husband," he says. "Yes," she says, but does not seem to believe it. He fixes his eyes on her, as if with his whole soul he would convince her, when she says, "Yes, you are Ulysses, my husband; the night is very warm, will you help me to remove our bedstead into the garden." "Now I recognize my dear old wife," said he; "you know I hewed it out of a tree myself, so that it is fixed in one part and cannot be moved. It is only you and I that knew that." When she heard that she had no more doubts, and she screamed aloud, and fell round his neck. When we hear this read we know that love enduring is here on earth. Novels cannot be like that, they give us a totally wrong and biased means of judging of life, and they ought to be abolished. There are three or four novels published every day, and if we total up the number of copies of each novel that are sent into the country throughout the year the figures will run into hundreds of thousands. They are shovelled out at this rate in Germany too, and also in America where if they have not their own they take those of the English, if not copyrighted. And they are read and read by thousands and thousands of people. It is this that falsifies their joys, and throws everything out of gear, and what

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

is it worth to themselves and to others? It is a convincing proof that if the Greeks had nothing to say on this subject, then there really can be nothing to say.

In peasant life it is different, with them they marry young, not from love but that they may have two more hands to work. We do not refer to tradespeople either; for they too marry for the simple purpose of co-operation. But we are now speaking of gentlemen and ladies in the *monde*, a class whose duty it is to drop things that do not exist, to give up the novel, which begets false ideas. It is for them to give time to the young to build up the body and the heart on true lines, and they will thus build up the nation. A man in this class is no man before he is thirty. It is the body he has to build up, and nature is constantly working at that one thing. If he thinks he loves at twenty, it is not real love but only the reflex of literature and a false reflection. Let him wait till he is thirty; and when he falls in love then, he will say, "I am loving, and it is the most serious affair of my life." Lies and fiction must exist in all countries like this. We have only to look at the Prime Minister, the man who rules England, and he had no precedence over the Lord Chancellor; his position was assigned him only the other day. Most things are fictions in great nations. All this is not a matter of reproach, but it is not necessary to keep up the fiction of love. From the servants to the

PLATO

lady in the drawing-room, all allow certain novelists to fill their heads with wrong notions, whereas they should try and strengthen themselves; they should make themselves as sound and as strong as possible, they should prepare for the conflicts that are coming, and they must come in a few years.

Love proper will come, much as there is mystery in it. It is a most incomprehensible passion, for lovers who think they love one another, yet in another moment will think that they hate one another. Goethe well expresses this in his works. Yet with all that mysticism the thing is very simple. Love means unity; it means being united, it means family, perpetuity and immortality. It is the genius of our own race that beckons us; it is the force that rules the world, and we cannot get out of it. It is like those terrible Irish fairy tales where the fairy comes in to the hearth and does not wish to go alone and she calls one of the girls to go with her. The girl does not want to go but she must, she goes and dies. It is so with the child and the Erlking. The child must go. He is terrified; but he must—the call is imperative. The father says it is only the wind. When he arrives home he finds the child dead. The meaning of all this is immortality, which is far bigger than the individual. It has been distinctly stated that philosophy attempts to give the individual a real home,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

but the individual is only the part of an enormous whole, and we must go with it. It is the force that holds us, and it is not to be denied. It will draw us, and, like the Irish fairy, we are called back to the heart of things, and we must go if we die. It was not only the wind, but the Erlking ; and the child died.

Plato says that man has a strong and infinite craving for something immortal, and that this craving is stronger than any other. He says that if we prove to him that there is no immortality, he will point out to us that it is here, the mere fact of loving a woman is a craving for immortality. And not only has Plato said this, but all the sages of the world, and our own unanswerable instinct also tells us that it is so. All the rest that we hear is mere bunkum. That is why people never thought there was anything criminal in a great love. We do not go to novels for this aspect of great love. We will see it in the Odyssey, we have it in the Iliad ; for instance, where Helen said, " You seem to be sad, I will brew you a drink so intoxicating that you can see your mother murdered and not feel sad." She meant by that drink the waters of Love, the true Lethe that makes us forget all else. Love in that sense, when it comes to a person in due time, is life ; when it does not come to him, he is really dead. This, it may be said, is real life, when a man loves, when a woman loves, it is

PLATO

endless life and they are only conscious of it when they love. But this love only comes when they are mature. Some get it before others, a woman not before she is twenty-five to twenty-eight ; and a man, not before he is thirty-five. And that is why the Greeks never talked about that love, whereas we, we fill the world with novels on what is not love.

Of that other, the real love, we find Plato, and also Xenophon, though he is dry reading, both speak of it as immortality ; in this sign, you will be conqueror, they say, you will be immortal. In that phase of it, it is not even love of a mere child, it is more than all that. And in that speech in the Symposium Socrates says that love is all-pervading, it is the whole of nature. Conflict is indeed the father of things and of development, but love is the mother. There has been nothing great done in this world except through great conflicts, and things have been crowned and brought to final shape by love ; and so the two work together. For our own immortality we are doing the business of the world, not only by conflicts, but by love too, and it is the combined force that moves the world. It is the men who are engaged in the conflict, and the women in the love. And whether we concentrate that love on children, or wife, or intellectual pursuit, or on country, it is always the same, it is the lever that moves the world. It is the idea we have,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

whether it is the exalted love of St. Francis, or merely the *bourgeois* love, that it is not only for ourselves that we are working, but that we are doing something for the woof of the Universe as Goethe says, we are in the workhouse of Nature, and we are working out the great design. At this we cannot expect that the young can work, they are too egoistic, too selfish. It must be the mature who must try to understand the Universe, who must try to approach the Sphinx, but for this we must wait, we cannot get it in a penny novel at the age of eighteen or twenty. We cannot get it without experience. For more than this we would want a Pericles, a Napoleon, and a Cæsar rolled into one, and such a man does not exist. The Greeks said the gods were like that. For us, let us try to love one thing, be it child, friend, study, or country. In this country the English are so averse to emotion; they think it makes a man effeminate. It is wrong to think so, for unless love pervades the country, that country cannot hope to get great men. It is certain that if Napoleon had not a heart like the Alps, he could not have been Napoleon. It is love that makes the man, it is love that really governs everything in the end, from millions of sources. If we speak of love with a supercilious smile, and think of it as if it really does not exist, or talk of it as a hypnotic dream like that of St. Francis or Werther, this would be very foolish.

PLATO

That country is the greatest which has the greatest amount of love, by this is not meant only that polite, that unique thing which is called love amongst us. Speech, after all, is not necessary, there can even be silent love, for speech is only a *pis aller*, a make-believe, for we know we can never express love. It is only when we bring into our life that great principle of love, that we shall be really great. What made the Athenians great? They were strong in their love of what was good and true. There was an old mule at Athens that had done good work in the wars, better than the other mules, so that mule was by public law granted shelter amidst those grand architectural wonders, and they fed that mule and loved it. We love to-day, but if true we will love to-morrow, and still more in fifteen years. And so did the Greeks, they loved colour, light, stones, birds, beasts, and that is why they were Athenians. Their hearts were big, and when they smiled they loved one another, and they hated one another too, and this had to be, for it goes with love. Why, even the Romans invariably kissed one another when they met in the streets. If such a thing were suggested in England, the people would say it was unmanly. Surely the Romans were manly enough; and yet even their slaves kissed their masters. And so it was with the Hellenes.

In ending this discourse on love it is only

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

necessary to state that the Symposium should be read through. It is no exaggeration, no mere day dreams, to say that love is not at the bottom but at the end of things. Whatever in the present or in the past has taken harmonious shape, we may be sure that there has been love in it. Let us, therefore, teach our young to love, and to love as we find it in the Symposium of Plato. Love there is a most serious, a most tragic thing, but it is also most beatifying. And we must remember, also, that whatever is said in the Symposium still holds good to the present day.

SECOND COURSE

CHAPTER I

THE subject we are going to deal with in the following chapters, *Plato and his Writings*, requires a little explanation, and we will just premise a few points in order that we should meet with no difficulties. Let us, in the first place, have no misunderstandings about Plato. When we hear Plato mentioned we jump to the conclusion that there is something erudite here ; that it is so complicated a subject that only university dons and professors can unravel it ; that it requires brains of unusual capacity and deep learning to take in all the wisdom that is comprehended in the name Plato. If such an idea exists, let us at once disabuse our mind of it, and let it be understood at the start that Plato means nothing of the sort. He is as simple as he can be, as naïve and life-like as any work of art in Greece. As Socrates talked openly in the market-place to any one who cared to listen to him, so Plato meant to write for everybody, for the man in the street ; and it will be necessary, too, to mark

PLATO

the distinction between him and modern philosophers. In reading him we at once see that we are dealing with no technical jargon. It is not so with Herbert Spencer, with Hegel, or those other modern philosophers, who have invented so complicated and technical a vocabulary that ordinary people can neither follow nor understand them. Plato talks in simple Greek, the ordinary dialect of Athens, with its finely measured rhythm and cadence. Professors tell us they alone understand him, and it is through their commentaries we can hope to gain any knowledge of the meaning of Plato.

But it may be accepted without question that their commentaries are infinitely less intelligible than Plato, and the reason for it is very simple. Plato was eminently a man of the world, and not an armchair philosopher. He had gone through all the experiences of life and had suffered, there had been crises and conflicts in his life of no ordinary kind, he was sold as a slave, was the friend of kings, a member of the greatest commonwealth in existence, the pupil of Socrates, the teacher of Aristotle. He had travelled much besides; he went from Athens to Corinth, to Megara, to Tarentum, to Syracuse; he saw around him the strong life of Athens, where men and women were at their best, in amusement, in sorrow, or in love, and it was, as it were, by a species of internal wireless telephony that he got

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

his ideas. That is Plato, and what he says is the reflex of the life that he had lived. He who does not know life, our armchair professors, for instance, and they who are too young, cannot understand Plato. But it is different with those who have gone through the crises and the conflicts of life. We do not mean the poor, who certainly have their conflicts of life, but theirs is a grinding and a sordid conflict. It is really the rich and the upper classes in whom rests the making of their country, it is these who have travelled much, who have seen life, who have gone through many a conflict, many a crisis in life that is unspoken, and unseen ; and it is for them to see and to know what Plato means, and thus to apply, if possible, the experiences of the greatest sage of the greatest nation of antiquity to our modern-day life. Those who were present at Plato's dialogues were the high-bred people of Athens, who were all men of the world. He rarely, if ever, addresses himself to the recluse scholar who thinks he can re-create the world, which he certainly cannot do. It is when people have gone through crises that they begin to get some sort of perspective of life. Commentaries are not worth the paper they are written on. Professors may go on sitting in their studies and wasting reams of good paper ; philologists may continue to put their knife into words, and evolve subtle meanings for them which they were never

PLATO

intended to bear, but they do not touch the substance, they do not grasp the ideals of life. These can only be touched by men and women of the world.

An audience similar to this sat before Lorenzo the Magnificent in Florence four hundred and thirty years ago, and heard him talk of Plato; and it will happen again two thousand years from now, for the simple reason that it is life, and he alone who has gone through life, as we have described life to be, can understand Plato. He is quite different from Aristotle, who, though profound, is dogmatic and very much of a "coach." In Plato we have life we can deal with in an infinity of phases with no hard and fast rules, it is an ever-changing condition which will remain fresh for all ages of mankind. With modern philosophers, with Herbert Spencer, for instance, we have a definite answer to a question; we have placed before us a neat formula; and these modern philosophers take a pride in not changing their ideas. With Plato this is not the case. He contradicts himself lustily, and in doing so he is perfectly honest, for he says that it is impossible to formulate truth into a neat formula, and he never makes the slightest difficulty in saying that he was mistaken in what he had said before. What is the use of Plato, it will be said, if he does that? Surely he cannot be trusted as a guide. Now, in England, we are all formalists,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

we like things to be distinct and positive ; but let it be stated definitely that philosophy cannot reach that level ; and for that reason, unless we take a strong and a sound view of modern life, we cannot understand Plato. The author was once lecturing at Cambridge, when, in dealing with his subject, he touched upon Goethe, and pointed out the numerous subjects in which he excelled and all that he knew, when a man got up and said, “ Why did he not stick to one thing ? ” Now that remark was intensely British, and the story is given as a warning that we have no intention of talking exclusively of Plato.

We shall get his ideas by taking a survey of modern life, and in doing this we shall, in essence, find that our discussions will bear on Plato, on his theory of ideas. The real commentary to Plato, then, at the present day is modern life, and the reason why professors in our Universities fail in their commentaries on Plato is that they do not know modern life.

As an example of what we mean, let us consider Plato when he talks of Spartan women, and we shall see at once, with our experience, the women in America. Woman there commands man ; to her, home and husband are nothing. And so it was in Sparta, where women lived for the State. And by the light of our modern experience we get, too, a much clearer idea of what the Spartan women were. Woman in Greece, as

PLATO

Aristotle thought, was a very important subject, and in connection with this very State, he said that Sparta was ruined by its women.

✓ What we mean to do is to know something of all the various problems that interest us in modern life. It will be like people going to the Tyrol for the benefit of its bracing atmosphere; with us the Tyrol will be Plato, to whom we shall go in order that his intellectual atmosphere might strengthen us; not indeed to *Yodel* with our tongues or our feet, but only to be strengthened. This is the meaning of our travel to Plato. Let us not have the preconceived idea that because Plato has said a thing therefore we must believe that dictum of his. No, but rather let us say, with the Florentines, Plato may be true, but there is still something greater than Plato, and that is truth. If taken in the right spirit Plato is good, but if we expect to have any "isms" introduced into his philosophy then let us at once say, no, not in the least, we shall not find them there. He is like the Tyrol, to brace our nerves, to make us see things in their right proportion, and that, we must admit, will be an immense boon. We hear daily of new "isms," of new theories and new problems, from all parts of the world, and if we have studied Plato we find we can bring our minds to bear on them, and we come to the conclusion that he helps us very much indeed in their solution.)

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

When the author was young, the rage was for materialism, and to such an extent was the idea carried that one of the professors, Carl Vogt, summed up the matter by saying that "we are what we eat." Another professor, Moleschott, went even further, and people really began to think that materialism was the key to the universe. Again, when he was at the University at Vienna, Wagner was everything; people went mad over him, thinkers and every one in Germany, and he was said to have reached the culminating point in music. The reaction, however, came; and, though Wagner has doubtless written great music, it was proved that the bulk of it was only, what Plato calls enharmonic music, music that appeals to the nerves. The victims of Wagner were innumerable, and people who had not got through the Tyrolean baths of Plato fell victims. It was time to fight shy of Wagner altogether.

It is the transparent sincerity of Plato, running through his works, which appeals to us, and it is with this ever before us that we shall be able to go to the study of him. Whatever it may be that interests us, it will pay us to consider what that grave and learned sage has to say about it, a man who said what he meant, and was always actuated by the great breath of truth, that is, of true philosophy. Universities, by their professors, treat of Plato, but only of Plato, and that is the very reason why we never

PLATO

can reach the heart of Plato. It is only, as we have said, through the conflicts of life, through the experiences of life, that we can hope to reach him and to understand him.

We will learn here to doubt, to be sceptical, but our doubts will only help us to invigorate our minds. We must not expect final results, there is no such thing as a final word on any subject. It is all, and always, going on. We constantly hear it said that history repeats itself; but let us be quite sure that history never repeats itself—historians, however, do. We shall never see another Athens with its full and rich life, with its Parthenon of exquisite grandeur; we shall never have another Academy with Plato, walking up and down it, and imparting his wisdom to all who cared to listen to him. We do not expect to find in Plato a panacea for all the problems of modern life, any more than we expect to find in him a “universal provider” for all our requirements, but by discussing his views and his ideas we shall be able to say that something has been done towards the strengthening of our minds.

And now we come to the question, what is philosophy? Let us see first what Plato says. According to him philosophy is the love of truth, the desire to know things because we love them. And to love a thing we must look at it from all sides; we want, in fact, to know something

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

of the contradictions of life, for all life, everything we have to do with, is full of contradictions. This will be best exemplified by two simple instances. What is a point? We are told that mathematically it has neither length, nor breadth nor thickness ; and if we take a line, which again has only length but no breadth, we are told it is made up of an infinity of points. Suppose we double this line, how many points would it contain ? Double the number, it will be said, but how can that be, as we cannot double infinity ? Surely, here we have a contradiction in a very simple problem of life. Again, we all think we know that 1 multiplied by 1 gives the result 1 only, but we cannot prove that, for we are at once confronted with the problem that 1 added to 1 make 2. If 1 added to 1 make 2, how can 1, when it is multiplied by 1, remain only as 1, where do we get any multiplication at all ? Thus we have a distinct contradiction. Again, let us consider love. What is it ? We are told that it is both altruistic and egoistic ; in the first sense we expend our love on others, which would be an unselfish love, but in doing that we are unconsciously loving ourselves and our own ideas, which makes it egoistic. How can it be both ? It is the attempt to reconcile these contradictions that Plato calls philosophy.

Again, in his dialogue called "Theætetus," he tells us that the goddess Iris was the daughter

PLATO

of Thaumas, the god of astonishment; and he means by this that unless we are able to be astonished we shall never be philosophers. The philosophic mind, of a truth, is always being astounded. Since Plato lived we have gone a little bit further with our accumulated experience of another two thousand years, and we have found out that the real root of philosophy lies in our having gone through a crisis. Only such persons are able to know what philosophy is, for it is the crisis that shakes them up and makes them ask what is life, what is sentiment? It is painful astonishment, indeed, and such painful astonishment is infinitely more emotional than the mere astonishment of Plato. That philosophy comes from personal crises, there is not a shadow of a doubt. Plato himself was made a philosopher because he was sold as a slave, because he saw the crisis through which Socrates passed. Coming to modern times, we get Spinoza whose life was full of intolerable crises. What, again, must the Athenians have suffered to have produced such a monument of grandeur as the Parthenon? People say it was their genius; but no, it was not genius, but their heart at the bottom of it.

And so it is that philosophy begins with crises, and none will ever be philosophers who have not gone through them; and the chief duty of philosophy is to reconcile the contradictions of our

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

experience. Moreover, as it was said at the beginning of this chapter, the class that is now listening to these words is the one best adapted to the study of it, for it is this class of a nation that goes through real crises. Diderot would be no Diderot, nor would there have been a Galiani had there not been a Mdme. d'Epinay ; Socrates, to have developed into what he did, needed that terrible shrew Xanthippe.

Do not let us imagine that philosophy is a matter of brain, for no matter what any one might say, and certainly the contrary has not been proved, the brain is not the seat of intellect. It is the heart that is responsible for all our actions. Plato teaches us that our intellectual powers come from our emotions, and that if we neglect the emotions we will have no philosophy whatever ; this is only an ordinary law of nature, that organs that do not perform their functions become atrophied. The terrible fate of Spinoza and the personal crises of those others we have mentioned can thus be traced to the working of their emotions.

To come back to our point. , Socrates and Plato both said that philosophy meant truth ; and that truth and virtue cannot be two different things. Plato asked Socrates if they could be taught, and Socrates lived and died with the idea that they could. But if that idea of Socrates were true, then the world would be a millennium.

PLATO

Plato, in his early days, thought as Socrates did, but later on he says that philosophy is a most needful thing, and so is virtue, and he asks if they can be taught, can they be made over to any one. Later on he changes his mind, and says he does not think that they can be taught, but that there must be a predisposition on the part of the person who wants to study philosophy, or to acquire virtue. He points out that Aristides, that Themistocles, were men of virtue, and surely they were never taught to acquire it.

In Greece women were of no account, men alone did everything, and so Plato involuntarily got the idea that philosophy was a question of reason, because he was in a state in which the reasonable and reasoning being, man, was predominant; but that is not the case to-day, when virile preponderance no longer holds good. In America, as we have already seen, a woman means something; in France to-day she counts a lot. If Plato then lived in an atmosphere where man was predominant, and where the constitution was a reasoned thing, Plato would naturally come to the conclusion that virtue could be taught; and so it is that we find in his dialogue, Anitus saying, we do not want you, meaning a teacher of virtue, all *that* is being done by the State. He distinctly wavers in his opinion. First, then, we find Socrates saying that it can be taught, and then we have Plato saying that

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

it cannot quite be taught. The question, then, arises for us, Who shall have the education of our children, men or women? If it is to be left to men, then it will be by reason and logic; but if it is left to women, then it will be guided by emotion. Should young men and women be educated by means of sports, and the arts, or should it be by intellectual subjects? The effect of intellectual subjects in education may be instanced, in passing, in the case of Hungary, where everybody is so over-intellectualized that they have become so many dullards; they will talk on any subject under the sun, from Byzantine music or Wagner to Shakespeare, whom they know better than he is known in this country; but that is all, it leads to nothing beyond. It will be said, of course, that it is far more likely that a nation brought up on intellectual subjects alone will do great things; let us, however, not decide on that point, but let philosophy help us. We have just said that education if left to women will be guided by emotion. There is no doubt that the female element is instinct with great emotions; there is something in women that cannot be analyzed, something that is subconscious. Should we utilize this marvellous power of women in our educational system? Is it enough to effect the intellectualization of our youth by giving them a cachet of reason, and nothing but reason, or should we do better by having women to teach

PLATO

them till they are twelve or fourteen? This is what Plato means when we see him wavering over the question, "Can virtue be taught?"

It is now in our power to discuss a question so deep, affecting in truth, the life of the nation. What line of education is to prevail? Should the emotional side of youth be cultivated, should the education be artistic, should games be encouraged, or should we leave it all to the schoolmaster to form the character of the nation? If we look to Germany, we find that the method pursued there is distinctly Platonic, and it is possible to learn some lessons from that country.

The sayings of Plato in connection with this subject in his dialogues may seem as if they were abstract statements, but there is a world of thought behind them, when for instance he says there is one virtue, and again there are several virtues. Behind such abstract sentences there lurk great problems. Such questions as the position of woman in the education of youth, and whether the subconscious mind ought to be submerged, is only one of many questions of immense moment, and in dealing with such questions we seem to be in the midst of unseen worlds, with something behind us driving us on. What we want to do is to try to reach an ideal, with the help of this driving force; we may never reach it, but we can at least try and work out a system for whatever problems of life that confront

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

us; and these preliminary remarks are made with a view to enable us to discuss all such problems in a right spirit, and with the help of Plato, whose views are as fresh now as they were over two thousand years ago. It is, then, modern life, in all its phases, that we mean to take up as the subject of discussion in the succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER II

WE have now to approach a problem which looks difficult indeed, but which must be thoroughly understood before it can be taught. For it is the greatest absurdity, as we said, that men should attempt to teach Plato before they have learnt to understand him. At the Universities, we see young dons of twenty-two attempting this feat ; estimable young men, no doubt, whose experience of life may have extended to having been drunk once or twice, or perhaps having been smiled upon by a barmaid. How can such a person understand Plato, much less teach him ? It is only men and women of the world, who have been tried and proved by its hard experience, who have undergone crises, that can really understand Plato.

Before we proceed further we must be able to discriminate with great distinctness between the general and the particular ; for unless we understand the difference clearly, our progress will be small, as everything in philosophy comes back to that. This is a subject which has gone through interminable controversies in the Middle Ages,

THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

numberless works having been written on it by the greatest thinkers ; Abelard, for instance, who went through frightful crises—and such men are more apt to see something in what we are going to discuss than our armchair philosophers, who are not capable of getting at the pulse, the heart-throb of the matter. The efforts of these latter are spent on mere scholastic fence, but when it comes to problems of everyday life, to the pantings for happiness, they are out of court. It is, then, by quite a different method to theirs that we shall proceed.

It is to Plato that we owe the great law of the Universal. He introduced the idea that behind all the particular events in human life, no matter of what phase, there is always to be found one great universal cause. Whether we call it the universal, the general, or the *a priori* idea, it is the innate idea within us, something that is quite before any experience.

It was Plato's superlative merit that he invented idealism ; it was he who introduced the notion of our striving for something that may be intangible, may be beyond our reach ; a notion that we are to get at something beyond the rainbow, which was not quite distinct. We may come across some of his ideas which are vague ; but when we have purified some of these vague ideas, we invariably come back to the great principle of the universal. And that we have directly from

PLATO

Plato. Neither the Babylonians nor the Egyptians had the faintest notion of this law of the universal; they dealt merely with particulars, and they never rose to any greatness as thinkers in consequence. Let us take, for example, the architecture of the Egyptians, their pyramids. They needed the idea of the triangle, and then of the rectangular triangle, and they took a particular beam or boulder to see if it was the exact length they needed; if not, then they tried another. The idea never occurred to them to say, "Suppose I had two boulders, three feet and four feet long, how long must the third be to form a rectangular triangle?" Each step required its own particular experiment, and the end of it was a mass of intolerable statistics which retarded progress. Whereas one Greek made the one universal formula, the formula of Pythagoras, which showed in one theoretic formula the method of always finding the requirements of any rectangular triangle. This is, then, what the universal does; it shortens the way of doing things; it is, in fact, mental stenography.

With the great advance made in the different sciences in the last half century, one is apt to think that as time goes on, in the next thousand years, the details accumulated by science will become so unwieldy, that no single person will be able to handle even one branch of it satisfactorily. There is not the least danger of this; on the

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

contrary, science will be simplified as time goes on, because of Plato's great law of the universal, which is brought into play. This law has served us in mathematics, in physics, and it will do in everything else; its immense value being the power of referring back all particular cases to one universal law. And this was the great discovery that Plato gave to the world, a discovery second only to that of the alphabet.

In this connection let us see what he says to his pupils. We have, in his dialogue of "Theætetus," pages 184-87 of the pagination of Stephanus, a most beautiful, incisive and profound discussion, which will give us an idea of his meaning. " You take up an orange, and you eat it and say that it is sweet. How can you tell that it is an orange? You say that you see it with your eyes, or that it is owing to your sense of sight. How do you know that it is sweet? That you can tell with another sense, that of taste. And all this makes you think that knowledge is nothing but a matter of the senses. That is quite true in this case, but there is just a little hitch. Can you tell me which sense it is that taught you the final *is*, which implies existence? Which sense gives you the idea that it *exists*? Which is that peculiar organ which is common to both sight and taste? " And to this Theætetus did not know what to say. Physiological psychology, then, which teaches us that knowledge comes from our senses is hopeless.

PLATO

We say that we only admit what we see and feel, but our perceptions are altogether misleading. Aristotle, in the 35th chapter, last section, of his "Problemata," effectually disposes of this knowledge by the senses. "Look, what philosophy of this kind is worth!" says Aristotle. And he exemplifies his argument by a simple pea, which we are asked to roll between the tips of the middle finger crossed over the index finger of the same hand, so that both fingers are in contact with the pea at the same time. In this experiment we distinctly feel that there are two peas and not one; and the feeling is so subtle that we are ready to swear that there must be two peas. This is Aristotle's famous argument to show the erroneousness of our senses, and there is no experiment so conclusive as this. It is clear that one of our senses is lying in this instance, and it is impossible to reduce them to harmony. We understand, then, why Plato says that our senses cannot be trusted. And we are led to the question, where does truth come from? Hence it is that Plato invented and introduced the knowledge of the universal. As a matter of fact we seem to think we hear of abstract terms, and we do not see what it all means. Knowledge, with Plato, means knowledge of the universal. We cannot know the particulars of life unless we refer them to the great universal at the back of all, and this great idea has produced the greatest of

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

results. We should never have been Europeans without the idea. It is the lack of it, too, that has killed nations. The Chinese, for instance, have not the faintest idea of universals ; they are incapable of the process of generalization. How can a nation possibly have the idea when they have encumbered their script with sixty thousand signs ? We have heard complaints of the length of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," the next edition of which will perhaps run to forty-five volumes ; but what would be the state of mind of Mr. Moberly Bell if he had to issue a Chinese Encyclopædia of six thousand volumes ; and all because the Chinese have no idea of universals. Another very homely example is that of the London cabby. Though he may take his fare regularly, week after week, at particular hours to a particular place, yet he will invariably ask where he is to go to. Here we have the particular predominant in a marked degree.

We may thus go from illustration to illustration until we come to the gist of it. If we take language, we find that people who are energetic in thought have few words to express their thoughts with. The ordinary French, a most energetic people, have only eight thousand or nine thousand words of common use. Nations, on the other hand, which have very many words do not think very much, for the simple reason that being unable to generalize, they need new

PLATO

words for each thing or occurrence. Some Germanic languages have very many words, and the result is that stated here. The Greeks were the most complete of nations, with a perfectly concise vocabulary, and they could constantly generalize. Their language is so simple in this respect that any one can read Herodotus or Plato after only six months of study. It is therefore that we are constrained, by physical impossibility in the management of our vocabulary, to use general ideas to cover a large number of objects, otherwise we could not talk at all. And this idea of generalization is carried to a peculiar extent in high German, a dialect used by scholars, where the same word is in some instances made to take two meanings exactly opposed to each other (as in *aufheben*), and this is not a mere accident, but is intentional. It is the Platonic idea of reducing unwieldy cluster of things into some order.

A mere knowledge of particulars does not help us in the least. We think when we have a fact we have everything, but that is not so. When a man has read Whitaker's Almanac he thinks he knows England. He knows nothing of it. Which of us can honestly say that he has a clear idea of the terrible thing he calls himself? We know all the facts of our lives very well, all the details are quite handy; perhaps we keep a diary, and we know all the events, all our sufferings,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

all our joys better than any period in history, but what of our life itself? How is it we do not know ourselves, and consider ourselves the greatest enigmas? How many men say to themselves at fifty, "My life has been a mistake, I have not understood life"? We are really amazed at ourselves, and why? for the reason that we have not found the universal, which is the pervading idea of our life.

In this country we lay inordinate value on particularities, on specialities; it is less so in Scotland, and still less in Ireland. But let us bear in mind that in order to be right we must have a theory, and if we do not agree to this then our mind will never be what it ought to be. Let us take a specialist in medicine; he must be a generalist as well, otherwise we can have no confidence in him. How can he have a special knowledge of the eye or the ear unless he has studied and mastered the physiological unity of the whole body, for one organ must necessarily act on another. But the belief in specialism is so great here that we have one man for the teeth, another for the ear, a third for the eye. This is indeed farcical, and can only lead to the absurdity of having one specialist for the right ear, and another for the left ear. We believe, in fact, in the specialist and we hate the generalist, which, as we have seen, is scarcely Platonic.

Let us take another subject, that of history.

PLATO

Unless we know general history, we cannot know anything about the particular parts of history. There is no such thing as a specialist historian of England, or of France, or of Charles the First. A man who says he is a specialist in chemistry, and knows no other science but chemistry, is not even a chemist. It is hopeless to try to comprehend the history of England without having a clear conception of European history ; and he who knows only English history does not even know the history of England. At some period it is, perhaps, France or Italy that has a marked influence on the trend of events going to make English history ; at another period it may be Germany or Spain ; so that we can never attain to a real understanding of English history without a general knowledge of European history. With European nations, there is, in fact, a vast political endosmose and exosmose, a coming and going among them. If we are not clear in seeing all this, then we have missed the first point in philosophy. There are twenty-one tissues which go to form every single organ in our body, and if we are to study the functions of any one organ, we must be expert in our knowledge of the physiological action of all the tissues. And so it is with history ; it is easier to study European history than it is to study English history ; and English history is easier than, say, the history of Bristol. At any rate, it is Plato's view that knowledge consists in finding the one

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

thing that is common to everything, that is, the universal.

But there are people who will turn round and say, we do not believe in Plato's views; our experience tells us that specialists have done great things, and in this practical world facts are worth more than theories. To these we can only say, you must believe in them, or you must have nothing to do with philosophy. When we talk of a line we mean the ideal line, not any particular line; and if we go through geometry we will find it dealing with nothing but universals. Such men as Herbert Spencer, who knew nothing about the psychology of life, lay down hard and fast rules and try to fix us in grooves so that we cannot move outside them. What is man, woman, or child we may know; but what the plant is feeling we can never know. And so we go back to that old saying of Plato, that thinking means the way of finding the universal. Unless we do that we shall never know anything.

In music there are also universals almost as decisive as in all arts. We feel the scales, it may be in A Minor, or in G Minor. We find Schumann saying his most passionate things in G Minor; and he has the same predilection for the *fourth*. If we do not see all this, we do not know what music is; but if we are convinced, then we come to know with Plato that it is the universal that rules, and not the particular.

PLATO

What, in the realm of thought, is the general to the particular, that is Society to the individual. We do not know the manifold forces operating around us, or we would invariably find the universal for every individual and every society. In the case of Ireland, for instance, what is the general type? If we lived there we might find the universal underlying the Irishman. In England every one is very averse to generalization, which is a gift, an aptitude, that can never be taught; just as in music, we can never teach it to one who has not the sympathy for it. As it is the general always which dominates the particular, so it is the nation which dominates the individual, and this is Plato all over. We may, with Herbert Spencer, wrap ourselves up in the toga of particularism and say I am I, no one shall approach me. But then we must have nothing to do with philosophy. We are only the particulars that depend on the nation. The French, one of the finest of nations, who produced many splendid individuals, are now utterly demoralized. If they were not demoralized, they would produce not one Charlotte Corday, but a hundred Cordays; not one Mirabeau, but a hundred Mirabeaus; and if the nation is not in that particular state, then the individual is nowhere. And so with Poland, whose men and women were wonderfully clever and charming, but the nation was demoralized to the core. The tsigan, too, is demoralized, and that is

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

the reason he can play music as he does ; in his despair he can find tones no one else can think of. It was the Renaissance that made the great painters. What we are saying is not only the foundation of Plato and of all philosophy, but the foundation of nations ; for no nation can do anything without having a universal. Themistocles, it is true, made Athens, but Athens was sure of producing a Themistocles. Let us take another nation, the Austrian. They surpass the English in bodily strength, they are as clever, and an interesting people, but they are utterly demoralized. The universal underlying each Austrian is *nil*, and they may play the piano divinely, or be the greatest of *chefs*, but they will never do great things as long as their State remains what it is.

Let us hold on to the general principle that there are universals, and we have at once the possibility of summing up thousands of features in the one. This is the true philosophy, and unless the idea be seized we are groping in the dark. We should be like the Chinese, who, from ignorance of universals, having piled up the maddening total of sixty thousand signs to their script, find it impossible to telegraph in their own language, but must use English or French. This is almost as maddening as "Tit-Bits," which is not a gratifying thing to read. A thousand bits of this and that, all tacked on one after the other, but there is no knowledge in it, until we feel like crying out,

PLATO

"Give us something that will hang together, what we want is to understand things ; give us coherence." All this means the hatred of the general, the idea underlying the particular, which, if we neglect the power of finding, brings forth its inevitable consequences, and we come to grief. This was what happened to this country not long ago, when it had to spend two hundred and fifty millions of money, and lay down a hundred thousand lives to conquer the Boers, because of the inability to sum up in advance the powers of a great border nation. It is the general principle then that we must seek after, and we shall be able to collect millions of little facts and hang them together, all as reflected out of that universal.

It has long been remarked that "professions make faces" ; there is the doctor's face, there is the lawyer's face ; in the latter, people have often unkindly traced the resemblance to a wolf or a fox. The general in the particular is also shown in that professions make faces ; we have the unmistakable military face, for we see considerable similarity of the military type which is common to all nations, and which leaves its physiognomic mark. Then again, religions and churches leave their impressions. Who is it that cannot tell at a glance a Catholic from a Protestant priest, even if they were dressed alike ? In this case it is the universal which underlies the Catholic Church,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

and it has left its influence on every individual belonging to it. Who is it, again, that cannot tell the difference between the Oxford and the Cambridge types? The atmosphere of Oxford is its universal, and its marked influence is apparent on all its individuals. As for universals underlying races, we can tell the Irish smile at once, for the Irish people have a peculiarly graceful smile, unlike any other smile among European nations; and we can recognize an Irish person by that peculiar smile, a movement of the mouth, which is quite unique and charming. Whence shall we say this comes? Then again, the eyes of the Americans are much closer together than those of this country, though the Americans will not admit that it is so. How shall we account for this peculiarity?

It is said that Society has a certain influence on individuals. Whether this be so or not, we cannot go wrong if we adhere to the principle that no great thing can come without the universal dominating the particular. And so it is that great crises produced great men; they were all made by universals. The Armada made Shakespeare, and not the bump of the phrenologist, just as Salamis made Æschylus and Sophocles; it was the Civil War that made Edgar Allan Poe; behind Chopin was the agony of Poland; and behind Napoleon, the French Revolution. And so, with thinkers and artists, we should be able to

PLATO

say, give us the universal in thought, and we will give you the particular. We can, in fact, never understand a particular thing until we have seen the nature and drift of the universal underlying it. This is the bottom and foundation of all philosophy.

CHAPTER III

WE are now going to discuss those ideas of Plato, which, as read by us in these modern times, seem very arid and very incomprehensible ; we are referring now to the views of Plato on the relations of body and mind. These views we shall try and make intelligible, and mould them into a workable hypothesis ; though it must not be understood that Plato meant them to be unintelligible, for his language, as we have said, is always simple, and he wrote for the average man, and not for scholars and philosophers or recluse thinkers. We find in his dialogues the ordinary gentlemen of his time. Glaucon, Ariston, and the others, were just the average gentlemen of Athens, who lived a very intense and agitated life, and had a deep interest in what constituted life ; in its problems and its causes. He appealed to men and women of the world ; those, in fact, who hold larger views of life than can be gained by voluntary exile from the vital fight. Arid, and in a manner incomprehensible, though the subject may be, we must treat it vigorously, and in doing so shall find that many a modern problem which has perplexed and

PLATO

occupied our thoughts will be brought under the influence of views which were held by this philosopher over two thousand years ago; and we shall find, too, that by the light he throws on these very subjects, he has made our task in arriving at the solution of these modern problems a comparatively easy one.

We shall find Plato not treating of generalities only, but he discusses those generalities by going to concrete cases. He deals with such questions as the relation of the body to the mind, of matter to spirit, very tersely. And if we ask whether Plato thought there were any relations between them, we would find him saying there were none. In this connection, as in all other writings of Plato, we shall find many contradictions. He never speaks of these subjects in his earlier dialogues as he does in his later ones, but he has the one idea running through the whole of his writings.

What Plato thought and discussed were many matters that have agitated people in modern times in America and here in England. It may be a matter of education, or of religion, or politics, or music, and if we wish to look at these matters from a philosophic point of view we must go deeper into them than only by a surface glance. If we were inventing a melody, for instance, we should have to consider what sort of a bass we were going to give it. It takes many tones to

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

make the harmonious whole, the treble may be very fine, but a great deal depends on the bass. Any number of ladies and gentlemen have written very fine melodies, but this does not make them musicians, as they cannot put in the bass. They cannot orchestrate or score, a most important element in the completed work. Take for, instance, the *Études Symphoniques* of Schumann, the melody of which was composed by an amateur, who could do nothing with the bass. This is what Plato does for us, he furnishes us with the fundamental, with the bass, to the lighter veins of our thought, to enable us to reach the depths or root of a question.

First of all, let us take his bass with regard to matter, and let us see what he thought of that, and perhaps we shall be able to make it of human interest by applying his views to modern problems. We might be amazed at hearing that anything that Plato said could possibly touch on the so-called crazes and fads of to-day. We are not going to condemn the men and women who take up these fads. Call them problems, if we will, but they turn up in various guises in America and here in England ; they may be theological, or hygienic, or educational, or physiological. All we desire to do is to see how Plato's ideas bear on these so-called fads, and we will find that he will give us help in the elucidation of these various problems, and will guide us as to the line we should decide

PLATO

to take, and the attitude we should strike with regard to this or that new-fangled craze.

And what did Plato say about matter? Is it to be despised and disdained, or is it to be raised up and ennobled? Is soul wedded to matter? He considers it quite of a secondary, of a low character; something that does not conduce to the sublime nature of the soul; and he even goes so far as to say that matter has no existence. This, to us, sounds absurd, for surely all our lives we have felt and handled matter which has so great a reality to us as to make us feel we were in a prison made of it; and it has thrust itself on our notice by its very beauty, by its sins and its diseases. The reality of all this Plato denies. Let us exemplify this denial of Plato by the following simile. We look into a mirror and see ourselves reflected in it; there is the form, the colour, every trait, every movement has its counterpart in the reflection. Can we say that that figure in the mirror has an independent existence? We cannot say that it has an existence at all. And this is what Plato means when he says that matter has no existence proper. The Greek word *στέρησις*, or negation, expresses what he attributes to matter. Existence, he says, is only in spirit, in ideas; everything else, according to him, is non-existent. Now all this is very hard to accept, when we feel there is such a thing as matter, such a thing as a

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

body ; all our feelings are, in fact, bound up in this body of ours through which we feel illness, joy, beauty—especially the beauty of women, and the strength of men. Surely, then, we cannot say that it is negative ! We find Plato himself, in his "Republic," not neglecting the body, far from it ; for he tells us there how man and woman should be educated physically, how washed, how dressed, in order that they might make a perfect commonwealth ; and in all this he lays the greatest stress on the welfare of the body. If, then, he says all this, how can he at the same time say there is no body ? It is like telling us to learn philosophy and then we shall be perfectly happy. It has been said by him that that state will be most perfect where kings will be philosophers, and philosophers will be kings. By this he only adumbrated the Catholic Church, and his anticipations have been marvellously realized in that Church, where the monarch is the spiritual head and therefore the greatest philosopher, the strongest *rapprochement* to the ideal state that the world has known. If that commonwealth be perfect where the philosophers are kings, then what would be the state of that commonwealth where not only kings and philosophers, but all people lived for the spirit and not for the material ? It would be even more perfect than the ideal state.

Matter was dealt with even before Plato, by Democritus, who said that it consisted of tiny

PLATO

atoms which went to make up bodies. Plato sneers at this theory, and says it is nothing of the kind; that there are no atoms, but that matter is that in which the spirit manifests itself, in which the spirit is reflected. In his "Timæus" he does not shrink from the theory that our soul goes through the animal kingdom first. He says that every vegetable, every animal, is a reflection of something spiritual, and that the human soul goes through various stages of reincarnations from the lower forms, going upwards until it reaches the highest work of nature, man. In the writings of all the philosophers there is a certain disdain of matter, what to them was merely bodily constitution. It was not only with the Greeks, but also with outside nations, whom they looked upon as barbarians; all sought for the spirit. It is strange to see even the Chinese Encyclopædia, by Ma-Tun-Lin, where he talks of various nations, and he says that the most beautiful nation are the Greeks. No other nation has ever dreamt of the perfection of beauty, and they could not have portrayed beauty if they had not among them beautiful models. Such sculptures as that of Venus of Milo, of Dionysus, and of Apollo Sauroctonus could not have been produced without living models. Plato exaggerated all this into a pride of humanity proper, which is the grandest thing in nature; for we are infinitely more complicated than anything else, and in that nature the soul is

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

superior to anything of a material kind. It is the spirit, indeed, a man's soul, not his body, which immortalizes him. The Greeks felt this above all nations, and gave vent to this feeling when, after the battle of Platæa, they saw the Persian guard lying, mostly naked, on the battlefield. These were fine limbs and muscles, mere physique, but there was no *ψυχή*, or soul, in it all. There was, too, Milo, their great athlete, who could carry an ox over his shoulders, but he was a man of great accomplishments and not merely a muscular animal. It was to training of the body and mind that the Greeks paid special attention, as we should do in the present day. In this respect the public school and university training in England, where games hold a foremost place in education, is far superior to the German system of gymnasia. A young man who has been captain of his cricket or football team is better equipped for the battle of life, and less selfish, than he would be if he came from mere book knowledge gained at a crammer's; better, too, than the German who comes from his gymnasium, where he has worked up his own muscles, without thought for others, a training which is apt to engender selfishness; games being more for the number, the gymnasium for the individual.

The theory of the ascendancy of spirit over body we shall find consistently maintained in Plato. In the "Timæus" he works out this theory. It is the

PLATO

one idea ever present in Plato, the conception of a God-Creator and the immortality of the soul. With him, matter has a shadowy existence, it is something low, which does not correspond with the real vocation of man. This is the key note of which he is the inventor. Before him neither Egyptian, Assyrian, nor Babylonian, nor any other philosopher ever dreamt of such a conception of the spirit.

In the last century there was a terrible wave of materialism, especially in this country. The progress of science had been so enormous that people really imagined that they had probed the riddle of the world. Huxley, Darwin, Tyndall in England; Haeckel, Molleschott, and Vogt in Germany, were the greatest champions of the new faith, and they were held to have found the key to the universe. One German author went so far as to propound "*Der Mensch ist was er isst;*" "a man is what he eats; tell me what a man eats, and I will tell you what he is." He possibly referred to what they call food in Germany; though there is no denying that he seriously believed what he said.

Again, it is taken for granted in these days that the brain is the seat of the intellect, but of this there is absolutely no scientific proof. They will tell us that as tears are the excretions of the eye, and bile the excretion of the liver, so are thoughts the excretion of the brain. It has, indeed, become a household word that the brain

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

is the seat of our intellect; but let us at once dispel such ideas, for there is not the very faintest scientific colour to the theory that the convolutions of that semi-liquid mass in our heads has anything to do with what we call intellect.

They think they can really explain everything. Well, we shall understand man, but we shall never understand plants. We may understand Napoleon, certainly the most complicated, the most antithetically compounded human we have had in history; but we are helpless before the humble violet, we will never understand it. No, we cannot understand matter, either by perception or by ideas, for the simple reason that matter has no universal behind it. Aristotle does not go the length of saying that it does not exist, but he says that it exists incidentally, that it has not the full brunt of existence; and this view is also Platonic.

There is a hopeless conflict of opinion among scientific people about matter, which proves to us that we cannot grasp what it is. One physicist will tell us that the ultimate thing in matter is an atom, another will dispute this, and say, no, matter is made up of molecules—or, again, of corpuscles; and so there is no agreement whatever. In chemistry there are hundreds of theories, and no two chemists have the same view of what matter really is. All this simply bears out Plato's dictum that we can never

PLATO

understand matter, because it does not exist, but we can understand the soul. Aristotle, too, in all his works gives us the most interesting details of matter, but in spite of these details he comes to the conclusion that he cannot understand it. Coming to modern times, we have Professor Zeller, who has written an elaborate book, "Philosophie der Griechen," and in the chapter on Plato's theory on matter, he too comes to the same conclusion; though it would be well to say that it would be practically impossible for any one, even for an Oxford or a Cambridge man, to follow the eminent professor in his arguments, or to understand him; it is even doubtful if he ever understood what he had written himself. The unreality of his thought is too transcendental for mere words. We ought really to follow Plato, and to find out the way in which he arrived at his ideas, arid though the subject may be. He will help us, and he will be to us a sort of a torch, to light us in our fight for life; a sort of handle which a man carries to put into a knife, so as to put that knife into a concrete matter, into the heart of things, to dissect them.

The whole of Christianity is based on that one thing, that matter was of no account. St. Jerome, Tertullian, and the early Christian fathers all built on this idea, which was fundamentally Platonic, and eminently consonant with the

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Christian doctrines. It was the idea that they must subdue matter, deny the body as the cause of all human ills, and torture it. Such were the ideas which prevailed in the fourth century, that the body as matter, was to be ignored, it was too low, and our prison; that we were to fly from it away into the desert; and thus arose the monks of the Church. These men considered the body not only as superfluous, but as the very fount and organ of evil; and especially the female body, which they looked upon as the temple of all evils, and it was from this theory of matter that the Church obtained its vast power. Thus thought they all from the patristic times to the times of Pope Hildebrand, Gregory VII., who issued his decree that no priest of the Church was to marry, because the body was the origin of all sin, and on that account the female body, the most beautiful of all bodies, was to be altogether shunned. And this idea has come down to us through the long struggle of the Middle Ages, and the conflict with the growing power of science, as the great Platonic idea which the Church had made its own. Many a person became a martyr for the idea. St. Gellert of Hungary, when the fierce and wild barbarians, the Magyars, were about to kill him, thanked them that at last he was going to get rid of his body, that vile body that his spirit had dragged through life. That is Plato with a vengeance.

PLATO

This saying, that matter is non-being, or sham-being, and that the soul is the only real thing, is not only philosophy which was taught in the schools, but through the agency of Christianity, this Platonic idea of the non-existence, the unimportance of matter, has become one of the greatest forces of the world, and it is something which is intimately connected with some of our dearest beliefs, the belief in the resurrection, the belief in our immortality. When we say that matter is not being, not real, we begin to realize something enormous, a vast Hope ; and we can understand at once what Raphael meant when he represented Plato as looking upward, and Aristotle as looking downward. That the body must go is certain, and it is certain therefore that it is not the source of our real happiness ; and that real happiness is centred in something that is not the body. A student of history has to reckon on a thousand years as a minute, and it may be that in another two thousand years Christianity will go, but that perennial thought will never go, that matter is not man, but that life, the soul, is enduring.

In these modern days there are so many reforms being inaugurated in America, and here in England. It is a phenomenon of the times that people are going about trying to do away with poverty, and to exterminate disease ; and numberless new “isms” are being formulated.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

This is but an attempt on the part of men to do in a half practical way what, in the main, philosophers have done in a theoretic way. Plato and his disciples sat and discussed and argued among themselves, but as to going about and converting people, it never entered into their minds. We, on the other hand, act differently, we travel far and wide, send our missionaries to the remotest corners of the earth, in order to try and make everybody subscribe to our own particular belief. Now all these "isms," all these problems of the modern day, all come back to one thing, whether matter is really negligible, or parallel with, or superior to spirit.

And this brings us to the consideration of a vast and remarkable movement which, ever since the seventies in the last century, has arisen in the United States, and spread through America into Europe. We are referring to the movement called Christian Science, and the name of the lady who originated it is well known here. If we read the book in which the tenets of this science are laid down, we are astonished to find that they are altogether Platonic. The all-ness of spirit and the nothingness of matter are there impressed on us. We are told that matter does not exist, that if our body is diseased it is only a form of error, and that if our spirit is only strong enough we can subdue such errors; in fact, by Christian Science we can heal diseases.¹⁴⁵ Now, history and

PLATO

philosophy have become very tolerant, and philosophers are certainly not so cock-sure as to the infallibility of their theories. We are not so cock-sure that we are propounding truth. We are not in the least sure that we have truth itself; but we are only deeply interested in truth, and we try to help people to believe in truth. This is the attitude of Plato and of Aristotle. We do not despise Christian Science, but let us hold on to the Platonic attitude, and leave to others, who think they are cock-sure, to apply for patents for their processes. Their fundamental principle, which is largely Platonic, that the great force is spirit, is undoubtedly true; but there are so many possibilities based on the idea that matter is secondary, that great care is necessary to enable us to arrive at a right judgment as to the correlation of spirit and matter. Plato was undoubtedly right when he said that spirit stands in the foremost place, and after that matter. Does Christian Science carry out Plato's line of thought, when it is said that if we clarify our judgment, the idea of disease will disappear, that disease is altogether an error? It is, indeed, the *Gesundbeten*, as the Germans called it hundreds of years before Mrs. Eddy. Has Plato anything to say on this subject? If we look into his "Timæus" we will find the self-same thing discussed there. Do we think that diseases can be removed by prayers? There we find Plato

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

dividing diseases into different groups, and he distinctly says that the predisposition of some diseases to be cured by the action of the mind is undoubted, but he is far from ascribing the cure of all diseases to the efficacy of prayer. We thus find that from the Platonic standpoint there is a distinct germ of truth in the idea adopted by Christian Science that matter is nothing, and that spirit is all ; but whether that idea has not been highly exaggerated is a point that requires our serious consideration.

We now come to another extraordinary phenomenon of modern times, which will be premised by an interesting anecdote of the lecturer's own experience. A gentleman asked him at one of his lectures how he could account for Shakespeare, how the son of a butcher at Stratford-on-Avon could have developed into the marvellous personality of a Shakespeare ? " Yes," said he, " he could ; but what was the questioner's own theory of the subject ? " " Oh ! " he said, " because he had a certain bump on his head, and it was that that enabled him to write Hamlet." " Well," was the answer, " that theory has one advantage. It is so exceedingly simple."

Phrenology starts from the idea that our bodies are the exact replicas of our minds. Dr. Gall taught people how to treat the brain, how to analyze that semi-liquid mass ; how certain convolutions of it dispose to certain trains of thought.

PLATO

He declared that every part of that brain is the cause and symptom of certain of our faculties ; that one particular convolution tends to ascendency in mathematics, another to poetry, a third to art, and so on. In fact we have simply to take the head, and we can at once account for a Shakespeare, or a Goethe, or a Pascal, by the particular bumps each is supposed to have had. Thus it was that the vast "science" of phrenology was started, which laid down that the body and the mind were correlated, and that by certain convolutions and bumps we could find out all the capacities and qualities of men. This relation of body and mind seemed an absolute axiom to most people ; but in spite of its claims no man has yet succeeded in showing the connection between certain portions of the brain and the various play of the mind ; there is, in fact, nothing of the kind. It has never been proved, never and nowhere, that any part of our brain, whether this or that convolution is the cause of any of our actions. No man, who thinks seriously, believes that these convolutions are the cause of any one single faculty we have.

In philosophy we do not believe in authorities ; we refuse to believe that such and such a person is an authority on a certain subject, and has said the final word on it. But we may take Professor Wundt, and say that he has tried to acquire a thorough knowledge of this subject. The ordinary philosopher does not always care for physiology,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

but Wundt has gone to the trouble of making thousands of experiments, and he is more likely to guide us in finding our way to the truth than any other man. Wundt, then, says that by the greatest number of experiments he has found that there is a certain parallelism between body and mind ; that there is a certain intimate relation, a parallelism, nothing more. But we cannot trace it, nor can we say that any special features of the face or the skull correspond to certain faculties of our mind ; or what is the direct cause of any particular phenomenon of mind. That is the result at which this writer of physiology and philosophy arrives, that there is a certain intimate relation, a parallelism, between body and mind ; but we can go no further. And how does this compare with the cock-sureness of thousands of people who assert the predominant power of bumps and convolutions !

Let us smile the quiet Socratic smile when we hear men declare, that because woman has a smaller brain mass therefore she has an inferior or smaller intellect. It is the same with men all over the world ; we do not meet a man in America or in Europe who does not say so. It is because of what the French call keeping the "professional place" for the men that it is to their interest to say that woman's intellect is inferior ; but we shall never find a man with some solid knowledge who will say so ; it is a position which

PLATO

he can never seriously maintain, and neither Wundt nor Flourens has ever attempted to do it. Broca has established one thing, and that is, if we extirpate the third frontal convolution in the left hemisphere of the brain, we destroy the power of speech. And this is a result which is negative only. With regard to memory, we read in books that the loss of another part of the brain will lead to a loss of memory, but this is not true. Flourens has proved that there might be such temporary loss, but the other parts of the brain make up for the portion thus extirpated, and the memory is gradually restored. Thus we will find Wundt, Goltz, Munk, Hitzig, all having theories of their own; but what shall *we* do who are not physiologists? Professor A. says that he has located memory; Professor B. says that Professor A. is absolutely wrong. Under these circumstances all we can do is to suspend our judgments. Thus it is that we find that going beyond Plato has landed us in negative results. We still do not know how we speak; we only know that if a certain portion of brain substance be excised, we cannot speak at all; a purely negative result. And at all this controversy of this scholar and that professor, Plato sits serenely in his academy and smiles, and says, "It is as I told you. Here you have, two thousand years after me, a man named Wundt. After experimenting all he can to prove that spirit is in matter, he has come

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

to the same result as I did, that there is no causal relation between matter and spirit."

Again, everything in this country is ascribed to the climate, one's character, one's temper, even intellectual phenomena are all put down to climate. One meets a friend, and says, "Ah, you do not seem so cheerful this morning." "Oh! it is the confounded climate!" is the answer. Now, can climate have such an influence on our temper? From Plato's view, this cannot be held to be true for one moment. In Iceland, with an abominable climate, we have one of the most cheerful people in the world. So too in Greenland, where the climate is awful, and the people live mostly underground, in dark caverns, a more cheerful people than the Greenlanders cannot be imagined. All this only serves to stimulate the discussion whether matter has or has not an influence on the mind. People will tell us that climate has that influence, and that it is the most powerful cause of national characteristics; but let us leave this question and come to another equally important, that of race. It is a matter of ordinary knowledge that people are profoundly convinced with the idea of race, which they think depends on the peculiar constitution of the blood, and they will talk as if there were really such distinctions as blue blood, and red blood. The idea of race lacks any serious foundation in fact, and is altogether un-Platonic.

PLATO

Again, what about sports, and the idea of strengthening the muscles, and of getting the body into a fit condition ? Has the Platonic idea any *raison d'être* in that ? Will the exercise and training of the body add anything so as to better the constitution of the intellect ? Are gymnastics, the German method of training the body and the muscles, better than the English method of sports, or are sports better than the gymnasia ? Or were the Greeks wiser than either the English or the Germans in having a third description, which was a mixture of bodily and intellectual training ? We shall find Plato extremely helpful in any decision we may come to on these questions, and surely with that help some mean can be found between these three methods, which will conduce to the benefit of the nation, and produce a proper development of both mind and body. That such a mean is extremely desirable there can be no doubt, if we contemplate the condition of some of the greatest thinkers of more recent times. One may say that Pascal had a wretched constitution and was constantly ill ; he was even known to have solved his greatest problems while suffering from a raging tooth-ache ; Spinoza was also afflicted with much suffering and ultimately died of phthisis ; and Leibniz was no better in this respect. How does all this bear on the relation of body to mind ? What has been built on the bass, and have we probed to the taproot

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

of our national existence ? All these questions are most important for the mothers of a nation to consider. The question is, is matter existent or non-existent ? May we neglect the body, as some of us do, by eating nothing, or subsisting perhaps on tabloids ; or is it important to cultivate the body as well as the mind ? The mean would be to accept the parallelism of body and mind ; for, though it is necessary to work up the mind, it is equally essential that the body should also be worked up. And by this double function of cultivating both, and conjointly, we may rise to a higher state than even Plato contemplated. What are we meant to do in this life, is a most pertinent question for us all. This Europe of ours is really a Greater Hellas, and we are trying to have, in an enormous continent and in America, what the Greeks had in a small area. Shall we not, like them, try to reach the ideal state ? There are various aspirations in different states, and in different cities. In one it may be a race for fame, and in another a race for wealth ; but we must remember that money can never make up for the neglect of the true and real *ψυχή*. If we depended on that alone, then our souls would indeed be *dépaysés*, and therefore never quite happy ; for thoughts will operate in a troubled medium if we neglect the truth of being. Under these conditions, then, the problem of the relation of body to mind becomes really a cosmic problem.

CHAPTER IV

WE have now to discuss one of the most difficult, one of the most subtle, of the problems arising from a study of Plato. It is a subject which it might be said, constitutes the entire object of life, for every human being seeks after it. What is happiness? How can we make or acquire happiness? And when we have got it, what can we do to keep it? This, indeed, is one of the deepest, if not the very deepest, of problems; we might say the main object of our life. And can Plato help us in coming to some conclusion with regard to it? The greatest thinkers of life have threshed out the subject, and have given us some means for acquiring this, the highest good; but each has a different conception as to what happiness comprises; some have particular, some, very singular ideas about it. Most people undoubtedly have their own ideas of what happiness is, so it would be difficult to give a general definition.

Plato may lead us to some sort of a decision, although Plato's idea of happiness cannot apply to our modern needs. The world he lived in, and our modern world, must necessarily be entirely

THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

different. We have lost the simplicity of the Greek life, where there was no rush, no fidgetiness, but only that placidity which is conducive to happiness, a *juste milieu* so to speak, which was Plato's view of solving the problem. Our lives, on the other hand, are so complex that it depends entirely on what sort of media we are living in to judge what constitutes our happiness. Let us, for instance, take the Continental peasant class, and we shall see that the peasantry of Germany, of France, place the possession of money far above all other sources of happiness. Even the peasants of Hungary believe that the shekel is the one great thing to strive for as the goal of happiness; and a man who has got five hundred francs feels himself perfectly happy. Woman, child, art, music, power, ambition are absolutely nothing to these peasants of France or Germany compared with the possession of money, of which they are the greatest worshippers. Unless we have personal knowledge of the lives of these people, we cannot do better than learn of them from Balzac, the Shakespeare of France, the inimitable describer of the emotions of peasant life, and one of the keenest analysts of the human heart. In his "Eugénie Grandet" he has drawn this terrible passion, this idea of money-worship, in the character of the old Grandet, who lived and died for that one thing—money.

To us who have got through some process of

PLATO

culture, something more than money is needed to give happiness. Why does Art absorb those who love it? Is it not because it is the means of forming ideals to lead us up higher in our conceptions of life? This is a subject we shall deal with later, though it is a "far cry" from happiness, real and lasting, which we are discussing at the present moment. What has Plato to say on it, and can we learn anything from him? He is, as we have seen, very contradictory in what he says, but he wrote as a naïve and an honest gentleman. He may be likened to Charles Darwin who says such and such a thing, conclusions which he has arrived at after deep thought and investigation, but he invariably also says that there may be objections, or he may have overlooked some points in arriving at those conclusions. There is another English genius, James Watt, even more naïve, who gives us not only his best ideas but also his worst; he held, that what we needed most was a "book of blots," as he called it. Here we have perfect honesty, and so it is with Plato, who may help us, though he says he cannot reply to the question, What is happiness? In his dialogue of "Theætetus" he gives us one source of getting happiness, and this he repeats in his "Phædon" and in the "Republic." Again, in his "Philebus" he gives us a totally different idea of what happiness is, and he promptly contradicts that view in his "Republic" again.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Logical consistency is the line which can only be followed by prigs ; for, there is no denying the fact that life is full of contradictions ; it is the light and shade of existence which make up life ; it is the shadow which shows up the light. We have misfortunes, and the absence of it, or the relief from it, at once gives us happiness ; in fact, without trials there would be no triumphs. It is the truest saying that by contrasts we live, and so it is that life is full of contradictions. If we get two reports of a proceeding, the one contradictory and the other logical, it would always be safest for us to accept the contradictory one as more true to life, for logical things are only to be found in the brain of the scholar, who racks his brain to make things fit together regardless of psychological conditions. St. Augustine will support us in this, for it was he who said *credo quia absurdum*, “ I believe it because it is absurd.”

Now, Plato was very much given to a disdain of everything of a bodily character ; and he always thought that the soul was superior to the body. His views are very clear on the subject, that if we mean to strive for the highest good, the more we do away with thoughts of the body, the quicker and the more likely are we to reach that highest good. We shall find this view very clearly put forth in the 176th page (Stephanus' edition) of his “Theætetus,” and millions of people

PLATO

have followed that Platonic view to the letter. What he says is that we must take a flight from matter, and as quickly as possible ; we must try and get away from the body ; and in getting into those regions where there is no matter we shall be coming nearer to God. That is, if we flee from material things, we shall get to the original source of happiness. This is the great principle of that vast class of men who are always striving to reach the highest degree of bliss, to shun contact with everything material.

The ancient Greeks did not believe in this, so we see that Plato's view is un-Hellenic. They despised people who liked to live alone, and away from the world. Such a person they would call a Cyclops, arguing that he could not be happy.

The Cynics of old also said that they despised matter, and we have the statement of Greeks that Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher of Corinth, was the happiest of men. We might well ask ourselves, can it be possible that Diogenes, who despised everything—men, women, the world—was a perfectly happy man ? The recipe for happiness was summed up by St. Philip Neri in three principles of life : first, to despise the world ; secondly, to despise one's self, and, if that were not enough, lastly, to despise being despised. Now, this is the very doctrine of the Cynics, and by the light of this we may ask ourselves again, Was Diogenes a *poseur*, or was he happy ?

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

The world is now two thousand years more advanced than when Plato lived, and we have known numberless people who have carried out to the letter what Plato has given us in his "Theætetus." From those who thus ran away from the world let us first take St. Francis d'Assissi. Was he the happiest of men? Matter did not exist for him; he gave up eating and drinking, and cut himself adrift from everything earthly or material. We cannot help feeling he was exceedingly happy, if we can imagine him as he walked abroad, looking on the very trees as his brothers and sisters; and, with that smile of his, receiving the most disastrous news, it might be of his dearest friends. He was altogether beyond all these earthly considerations; but was he really happy? We cannot tell, and we must leave that for each one of us to think out. In the old times there were no personal records, and so we have not the means of knowing the personal lives led by such men as these. In the same way we have St. Catherine of Siena, and Santa Teresa, and many other saints of the Catholic Church, who led unworldly lives; but we have no authentic documents by which we can judge whether their lives were really happy. It was not until the sixteenth century that they took to writing memoirs. Later still, in the seventeenth century, we come to something identical, of which we can speak with more certainty, of a man who carried

PLATO

out the very things we have just heard Plato lay down in his "Theætetus," and that man was Spinoza. He had made up his mind to be perfectly happy, and after experience had taught him that most things in life were absolutely vague. He says that he saw that the things he had generally dreaded had nothing in them, either good or bad. And so it was that he made up his mind to find that something which was to bring him perfect bliss; that something, by the rejection of everything, which was to make his soul good. And this he said he would enjoy to all eternity. When the author was young he admired the man for what seemed his unselfish renunciation, but after the experience he has had of life he cannot help thinking differently. Imagine the idea of one individual man saying that he was going to be perfectly happy alone! Happiness, to be found, must be in and with others, or we do not get it at all. So felt Field-Marshal Blücher at Waterloo, when he addressed his men, wavering at a charge against the enemy, "*Canaille*, do you want to live for ever?" Are we worthy of, can we claim such happiness? Suppose it were possible to attain to such happiness by giving up everything bodily and material, is it necessary for us to get such bliss? It must be as Spinoza, as Francis d'Assissi, all alone; there must be neither brother, nor father, nor child, nor wife; there must be no citizenship, nor anything of earthly account. All

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

this does indeed simplify matters, but it simplifies it far too much. When we are asked the question of attaining bliss or happiness, are we prepared to live in an attic, to give up family, to renounce the State? Spinoza lived in an attic, he had no family, no State; he had no mother, for she had died when he was young; he had no brother, for he had broken with him when he renounced the Jewish faith. He was, in fact, cut off from every worldly tie; and when everything is thus renounced, one is reduced to childish simplicity. Can we, under such circumstances, think that Spinoza was perfectly happy?

Let us imagine a tree that we have drawn on a plane surface of two dimensions suddenly endowed with life, and stepping out into space of three dimensions, what an enormous change this would represent! And it would be an equally enormous change if we, who are accustomed to a life of three dimensions, were suddenly reduced in our actions to a life of two dimensions. And this is what the life of such men as Spinoza represents. He despises brother, child, wife, his country, and everything material, and he says, "I am I; here I will live in an attic in Amsterdam, and here I will enjoy eternal bliss." Yes, it is simple to reduce himself from three to two dimensions, but he cannot take others with him, and therefore he cannot be happy. Alas, in these days we do not live in two dimensions, but we have increased

PLATO

them to ten or fifteen. We have Society, the Church, the State, and many others. We are humanity with great universals behind us ; we are no Spinozas, no saints—we are simply men and women—and we want to live in ten dimensions.

If Plato were here, we might say to him, “ You talk of the Cyclops as unhappy people, we are not that, we are only men and women, and we want to be happy, but everything is so complicated in our modern conditions ; how shall we reach happiness in such a case as ours ? Did you not say that universals determined the particulars ? You Greeks were the happiest people the world has had because you lived in one circle, the State being your great universal, whereas we to-day have three great concentric circles as universals standing behind us, the State, Church, and Society. In what manner are we in this complex state to get our universals to determine the particular ? Let us take the case of nations. If I am an Irishman or a Pole, I cannot be happy, because of the inexorable fate that has overtaken my country. For the individual to be happy the universal, which is the country, must be happy. It is the case also with Hungary, for no Hungarian is happy, and he cannot be. Is the Church always in sound condition ? Was it not at a period when the Church of England was unsound and unhappy that Wesley started Methodism ? No one then was happy in his religion because the great universal, the

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Church, was disturbed. It is even so with society ; if that be not sound, no individual can be sound. All this is your own doctrine, Plato. You, it is true, had not three universals behind you, but one circle, the *πόλις*. We, on the other hand, have three concentric circles ; and there is thus an enormous difference between us. What you have said in your "Theætetus," in your "Phædon" is extremely interesting ; but pardon us if we say that all that cannot apply to us in these modern days ; for we are not in one sphere, we have not only one universal behind us, we cannot be Francis or Spinoza ; we are men and women of the world, and we have to live in three distinct spheres. Tell us, then, how happiness, under these conditions, is to be attained ? "

Plato, in his "Theætetus," aims at the highest ideal, and he tells us that knowledge is virtue, and that virtue is happiness, and that anything else cannot be knowledge or happiness ; he also impresses on us the necessity of giving everything its due importance, not magnifying one at the expense of another ; the necessity, in fact, of retaining a due sense of proportion. There are, indeed, other sources of happiness, Art and Music, for instance. Art is a very great source of happiness, for it is the sublime, the pure idea that becomes manifested in it. There are also innocent pleasures, passionless pleasures which a man should enjoy. Bliss is thus not only one thing, but there

PLATO

are several sources by means of which we may get at it. Let us, then, in these modern days—and we have the advantage of two thousand more years of experience—try and find out whether happiness cannot be attained by people who are not philosophers, for it is not the philosopher who is alone happy.

There is a subtle point in favour of the Greeks. They imagined that happiness was a state ; and that is what it really comes to. With them a man could be perfectly happy, because he had the universal behind him, the Greek State. With us it is not a state, but an episode. *Le bonheur n'est pas un état, c'est un épisode.* It was this feeling that brought out in them that perfect reposefulness which we see in their statues. A visit to the Elgin marbles at the British Museum will show at a glance that repose, which is not to be found in any other sculpture in the world. Michael Angelo, Thorwaldsen, and Rodin could not attain that marvellous reposefulness of the Greek cheek, produced by a few simple lines ; the art is lost, and we cannot imitate it. There are plenty of kinds of cheek, modern, but not that Greek cheek, and why ? The Greeks had really the possibility of being happy. Many a man lived to a good old age, having gone through the whole gamut of pleasant feelings, and utterly exhausted with the bliss of life, when he could say, “I have been perfectly happy, and I am now ready to die.” The Greeks, let us

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

remember, did not trouble themselves much about a future life, because their own life was so pleasant and happy. It is because we are so discontented and agitated and troubled with our life here that we think and long for another life. We are told by Plutarch that the highest ideals of the Greeks lay in their Eleusinian mysteries, but these were held so sacred by them that no Greek ever revealed what he heard there, nor have recent excavations at the spot given us the smallest inkling of what constituted those mysteries. It was their harmonious method of life which rendered these Greeks so supremely happy, and which gave them those reposeful features that have come down to us in their statuary. They did not think happiness an episode of life, but the perennial state of our souls; and hundreds of thousands of them, in Athens, in Sparta, in Corinth, and elsewhere, lived with this idea ingrained in them, rendering them absolutely blissful. If we look at the statue of Sophocles we see happiness stamped on the features, and it was for this that the Greeks built him a chapel and worshipped him there as the heros Dexion. Would modern tragedians lend themselves to such treatment?

Alas! we live in three spheres, and what shall we do to obtain that bliss? To use a musical simile, the ancient Greek life was a *legato*; ours is *staccato*. The Greek life was like an *andante* of Mozart; ours is like a furious, agitating *scherzo*.

PLATO

There are countries, too, where life is not only *staccato*, but ten times worse. Modern life is, in fact, made up of jerkiness and fidgetiness, which any Greek would have despised. And this phase of the Greek mind was actually exemplified in an ordinary street fruit-seller, whom the author met in Chicago, that city of hustle. He was a poor Athenian, and when about to be commiserated with, he replied, looking round at the vast city, “This is not the city of Demosthenes ; but though I only sell fruit, I am a Greek.” Here was the deep disdain of the Hellene—there was, no doubt, Albanian and Slav blood in his veins, but he was still a Greek—for the fidgetiness, the jerkiness, the *staccato* of modern life. It was as much as to say, “I have lived a Greek, and I will die a Greek ; the *legato* of my life is preferable to your jar and hustle.” Thus also declared the Greek to the Christian in Bulwer Lytton’s “Last Days of Pompeii.” If the Greeks then believed that life could be arranged, and happiness secured on such a basis, we moderns can only turn round to Plato and say, “How beautiful, and how inapplicable is all this ; you, therefore, cannot be our guide through the complexities of our modern life.”

We have thus seen that what is, with us, a complication of three circles, was, with the Greeks, one power, a unity, the beautiful rounding-off of the tones of which made one harmony ; and in that state the influence of woman was very

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

different from what it is with us. We do find Plato, and also his pupil Xenophon, in his *Oἰκονομίκος*, referring to this power of woman, and talking of happiness coming to the man through his wife, and through his household. But, in the main, the Greek state was a man's state, and woman either did not count, or, as in Sparta, she was too great a force, and she never got her proper place at all. It was the Middle Ages that invented the modern woman, and now it is no longer men who decide how to be happy, there is also the woman to decide for ; and they also claim a right to be happy themselves, and not only to make man happy, and all this complicates the question immensely. The desire of all of us, men and women, is to find something that will make us perfectly happy in this life ; we cannot wait to obtain it in the next life, the information we possess of it being so meagre.

When Plato talks of the legend of the being, both man and woman, with four arms and four legs, who excited the envy of the gods by whom he was clove in twain, and who thus in two parts went ever seeking after each other, he meant to account for love ; and the question, " How shall we be happy ? " referred only to men ; but now there are women to be accounted for in addition to men, though they are not the same in all countries. In some she is too far ahead, like the Spartan women, and ends in bringing about the

PLATO

ruin of her country ; in others she is too much in the background ; there are also the means. But whether it be in France, or England, or Poland, or Hungary, what is the relationship of woman to happiness ? What has the Church to do with it ? What the State proper ? Anyhow, to find the answer do not let us retire, like Spinoza, into an attic, or into a monastery, and say, " I am a modern Cyclops, and I want eternal bliss, and here I mean to get it." St. Francis is finer than Spinoza, but we cannot compare him as the embodiment of happiness with the spirit which moved in Hadyn, or helped to produce the *quartets* of Schumann. We can have no definite recipe for acquiring happiness ; there are hints, however, which might profit us ; not more than hints. But in any attempts we make, let it be clear that no "isms" will help us, nor can we take happiness in in the shape of tabloids. All this is a pure matter for our discussion.

Considering the complicated nature of modern life, and how we are forced to live in three concentric spheres, while the Greeks lived in one sphere only, it stands to reason that we might be three times happier, or three times unhappier than they were. What we must maintain, and it is with reluctance that we have to do it, is that happiness is not an *état*. It comes between two series of events, or unhappinesses, in this life. In modern life happiness is but an episode, and the more we

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

get of that episode the better. We have not the capacity for experiencing real happiness unless we have gone through great crises and misfortunes. Money and rank by themselves will never do it. People think that by meeting and mixing with high people they have reached happiness, and nothing more can be desired. No, such is not the case. To have happiness we must first have misfortunes, and thus we see that unhappiness and happiness both make for one and the same thing. For our modern times, then, we shall find that Plato cannot help us, as his views apply to the Greek times, which were times of repose. It was Heracleitus who discovered the philosophy of the phenomenon that everything is constantly changing, and that we cannot be in the same state for any given time. And so it is that we find happiness to be the interval between two unhappinesses. When we are convalescent after a long illness we feel light and happy; when a great trouble is past, happiness comes over us at the thought that the misfortune is ended. It is through crises, indeed, that nations have gained their happiness. The English and the French have gone through greater crises than any other nation, and of an abominable nature; they have gone through life and death struggles, when all, perhaps, depended on a word; it may be victory, or war, or disaster. And so it is we find the French people always on the *qui vive*, and they are at once the saddest and

PLATO

the gayest of people. While in England there is more cheerfulness than there is in Germany or in Austria, and all because of the crises the English people have gone through. It is risk that brings out happiness. In South and Central America, where there are no national risks and no national crises, there it is vegetation but no life; it is merely a contentedness, but not a sense of happiness which people aim at.

There is no music without both the major and the minor key. When the minor key is added, there comes the solution of the theme, the full melody. If the minor key is wanting, as in Chinese music, then it becomes no music at all. And so it is with life, we increase its joys by multiplying its sorrows. There is the joke of that famous French wit, who was asked if he had much patience, "*Moi! de la patience? Énormément, mais pas pour longtemps,*" lots of it, but not for long, was his reply. And so it is with us, we have happiness, but it is not for long. And being the most agitated of nations, we have increased the number of keys by which we may open the door to that happiness, and curious ideas, too, exist as to the manner of attaining to it. Over in Bayswater the author noticed the other day a sign, which read, "Pleasant Sunday afternoons for young men;" here was one way of reaching that realm of bliss, but, alas! the appearance of the house rather suggested cholera

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

than happiness. But that is not all with reference to this notice for ready-made Sunday afternoon happiness. It is, unfortunately, the case that in this country the fact is quite lost sight of that it is the weekdays which make the Sunday. If the universal at the back of the Sunday is sad we shall take our Sundays in sad doses.

It is undoubtedly the case that it is in those nations which are most agitated, whether it be from a commercial, political, or military point of view, that we find very deep happiness; but it is for a time only. We cannot expect to be happy for ever; it is quite sufficient that we should be so for a little time. For our modern times this is our only standpoint. If Plato were to honour us now with his presence here, he would say that we can only be happy if we looked upon happiness as an episode; but if we wanted that happiness to be perennial, then we should live as the Greeks did, and as he has directed us in his "Republic." We should then be happy in an Utopian state. And that Republic or State of Plato will yet come to pass; many countries are even approaching it now. As we know, the ideal can never be really attained. Raphael's superb masterpieces were as nothing to the pictures he never painted. Our modern state, in the same way, is fast approaching to that ideal of Plato. That will be the time when the mind will be developed as well as the body; when the intellect and the emotions will

PLATO

work in unison ; when there will be harmony and symphony of power ; then we will, of a surety, change *l'épisode* into *l'état*, but we must remember to have the universal perfect ; to have a perfect and a sound state, where every organ is in its right place, and this is not impossible ; indeed, it would seem quite feasible in this Europe, which is really Greater Hellas. That will be when woman takes her proper place in the economy of the State, and when man becomes properly educated ; we shall then get what we may call happiness, that perfect bliss and reposefulness which we are convinced that millions of ancient Greeks lived to enjoy ; that life of absolute, perfect happiness, which we see reflected in their exquisite art, in their statues, and in their buildings, and which we, in these days, cannot imitate.

Happiness does not depend on ourselves, whether it be happiness in our own individual selves, in the family, in the State, or in God. One thing is more or less certain, that it must come from a universal behind us. In this we do not stand alone ; we are not like the fir-tree of Heine, which dreamed only of the palm-tree in the South ; we must all act together. And if that whole, which is the nation, is sound, then we shall be all sound too ; for no man can be happy unless his country is happy. It may be cruel to say so, but a Spaniard cannot be happy,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

neither can a Pole, nor an Austrian ; because that bigger *ensemble* of which he is a part is in a morbid and a decadent condition. We are only the complements or organs of a vaster, of a higher, whole. If, then, only this be realized ; if there be harmony in the universal, then we shall reach that perennial happiness. This great community of things is the essence of all philosophical ideas. It is through Plato that we get at the first idea of the harmony of things in the universal, leading to perfect bliss ; and it is in Plato too that we have an earnest and a profound attempt to get at the real root of happiness.

There was David Strauss who denied the existence of Jesus, and said he was a myth. In the last century most historical personages of antiquity have had their personalities taken away from them, and have been declared to be myths. Well, Strauss had not an idea of history, nor did he understand the nature of personalities. He, however, said that bliss must come from somewhere ; that art was the source of bliss, and if we increased art it would give us more chance of happiness.

We may say that Plato, in his "Republic," touches too much on the ideal, but his views are nevertheless true, and if we keep on approaching to that state of his we shall assuredly be approaching the time when we shall be as happy as the Greeks were ; but we must go on doing all

PLATO

in our power to attain that state. Our efforts may seem illogical, but illogical efforts are not quite wrong ; they are the outcome of the emotions, and hence they come necessarily from our hearts. Let us, then, make our efforts, illogical though they be, and we can trust to history to make them clear.

CHAPTER V

WE are now approaching a subject the discussion of which makes one tremble, for each one of us is quite convinced that he or she has no passions ; and if such things exist we imagine that they are of so low a character that they should be despised and crushed out of our existence. And yet there is no denying the fact that there is not one of us who is not moved by one or other passion ; in fact, all the great things of history, every great thing in life, and, lastly, we ourselves are all the outcome of passion.

There are in this country forty-three millions of islands, and in each one of these islands there is a volcano. We are the islands, and in each one of us there is that volcanic passion which is ever being kindled in some form or other, suppress it as we will. There is no living being anywhere who is not so moved by the passions. It may be a passion which is expressed, or, if unexpressed, then perhaps it is the more potent and withal a latent volcano. In these circumstances it becomes an imperative necessity for us to know what are these passions. It will be good for us to be

PLATO

generally interested in them; to try and define their roots and their effects, and not to condemn them as too low to be mentioned; as if it were something to be ashamed of and to be discouraged, but certainly not to be discussed. Those philosophers who have written on the subject have slurred over it, and have left us altogether in the lurch as to the true meaning of, and the advisability of having, passions. They have all had them, whether they recognized the fact or not; and some have gone through great tragedies of life, at the very root of which lies passion. But when it comes to the writing of books, the subject of passions is treated in the same way as the writing of a book of travel—where there is description of commonplace details with no human interest attaching. On the other hand, if we take those who have gone through life and, though swayed by passions, have not written anything about them, what do we find in their lives to give us a clue to arriving at a solution of this master force of our existence? It is an exceedingly difficult subject to deal with, but we need not despair at arriving at some solution of it. Our discussion of it will at least help us in finding what is the right perspective to take of it.

Let us, in the first place, come to Plato himself and ask him what he thinks of passions. In his “*Theætetus*,” “*Phædrus*,” and “*Timæus*,” we find him as usual wavering. He will give us no

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

direct answer, but at once takes refuge in a myth, in fact in two myths, which we shall presently consider. We must not be hard on Plato because he thus takes refuge in myths. It is in these that he buries great truths; it is a poetical way of expressing thought, and poetry is far more effective than either history or philosophy. Such modes of expression are not intended to be side issues, but they are the most perfect form he gave to his serious and mature thoughts.

As a student of history one is forced to make a study of passions; for passions are of the utmost importance in the making of history, and no history is ever made without them. Whether it be the history of an individual or of a nation, passion in one form or another enters into it. Whether we are tending towards a monarchy, or an oligarchy, or a democracy, it is our passions that sway us towards the course, and we shall find in democracy the essence of jealousy and envy, where each individual is striving for his own good. Many a man, in bitter irony, says it is jealousy in woman that makes them desire "*d'croire le cœur de l'autre*," by which means they realize that passion. Human nature is an unchangeable item which is guided by the universal behind it, and we have only to search for the fundamental to see what passion does in history. Sappho, and Heloise, and Abelard, and many more will show us that though times have changed, men and

PLATO

women have not changed. And as all great movements and actions are caused by nothing but passions, we must not be ashamed of them ; we must not limit them or reduce them to tiny dimensions. By doing so we should of necessity reduce art, music, and all those things that are born of passion. We should have no history, a distinct advantage, perhaps, to the boy who has to pass his examinations, but not to the world at large. Let us at once, then, dismiss from our minds that passions are a low thing, and that therefore they should not be cultivated ; remembering always that great things in history are due entirely to passions, and their suppression is against the development of the soul. In this connection Hegel truly said that nothing great has ever been done without passions. For us now to say that there is nothing good in passions, and to condemn it wholesale is indiscriminate folly.

What did Plato say of passions in general ? He thought that we lived in a dual world here, which was made up of a world of ideals and a world of matter. And he always tried to arrive at some sort of harmony between the two worlds. He said that man's instinct is always seeking after the ideal, but there are terrestrial desires too that come in the way, and so he came to the conclusion that there must be two parts in man—the one the image of the ideal, and the other that of the terrestrial. There is his power of will, his power

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

of energy, both images of the power of the great universal behind him, a something which drives man on in his pursuit of the ideal, so as to do something great. And then, again, we have his cupidity, that something which drives him on to desire things without reason. From such reasoning as this Plato was led to say that the soul consisted of three parts or layers—(1) that consisting of the very ideal portion, which is reason and insight ; (2) that which was less ideal ; and, lastly, (3) pure unreasoning desire. Should we say that this last was something low which we must curb and crush down and finally get rid of ? So great a nation as this should be careful that they do not carry such suppression to excess, for the results cannot but be disastrous, as we shall see as we proceed.

Plato's pupils asked him how he proposed to harmonize and bring together these conditions. He gives them different answers, and to get out of the difficulty he tells them a myth, which we shall find in his "Phædrus," the whole substance of which is nothing more or less than to illustrate the necessity of our keeping our passions under control, and not annihilating them. In this myth he describes a wonderful chariot which was drawn by two horses. One horse was beautiful in form and temper, the other, equally beautiful and large, was turbulent and restless. On the box of the chariot stood a charioteer who had the handling

PLATO

of these steeds. It was his duty to curb and guide them, and to keep the turbulent one in the right path. Here was a difficult task, for one steed wanted to soar high to Olympus to feed on the idealities of the gods, while the other tried to break away and keep down to terrestrial paths. If the charioteer be reason and insight it is well and good, but if he be too weak to check the animals and keep them in order, then it spells ruin to the chariot. Here we have a deep lesson to ponder over. In this myth will be found a true counterpart to our nature. Should we cultivate our passions, and guide them by our will as good charioteers or should we suppress them as something vile?

It will be best now to come to some concrete cases ; and in this chapter let us treat of the three grand passions, drink, avarice, and love. If we examine them from all points of view we shall have some idea what attitude to take up with regard to them. The first is the passion for drink, and from what we have seen of its effects when carried to excess, we are all agreed that it is a vile and abominable passion. It is held to be the curse of England and of America, and it has attracted the efforts of numberless people and institutions to suppress it. Now, in Hungary everybody drinks wine, and nobody is ever known to touch water as a beverage throughout his life. If a Hungarian were told, then,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

that efforts were made in America and in England to put down drinking, and to make people sign pledges for that purpose, he would think he was being made fun of. He could never believe that people could talk seriously about the "curse of drink." Can any one believe that the signing of a bit of paper as a pledge will curb human passions! How can people who have drunk all their lives deny the benefit of drink; and it is certain too that by such methods as the signing of pledges they can never stop it. The author was himself at a temperance meeting at Chicago where arguments, which did not seem strong to him, were brought against drink, and he was asked by a lady to sign the pledge. He declared his own views, but the lady persisted with her efforts; at last he said to her that such an action as the signing of a pledge would grievously offend his mother, and would cast absolute shame on her. The lady could certainly understand, said the author, the deep impression his mother must have made on him in all those years she gave to his bringing up; how then could he insult her now by admitting that her training was wasted, when all that is necessary is the signing of a bit of paper to keep him straight? He said ultimately that he would sign the pledge if she on her part also agreed to sign him a pledge, that she would never go wrong with any man. There was nothing more heard of his signing a pledge after

PLATO

that. Here is the point, the philosophical stand-point ; how can any person think that he will ever be able to curb his passions by the signing of a piece of paper ?

In the first book of his "Laws," Plato discusses the question of temperance. There we find Athenians discussing with Lacedæmonians. Now the Athenians drank wine, but the Spartans were practically teetotallers, being allowed to drink only on special occasions, during their festivals. If any Spartan had been found drunk at any other time, so rigorous were their laws that he would have been an outcast, and would have been shut up in a prison. The views of Plato, put into the mouths of the Athenians is this, " My friends, by not drinking you are trying to browbeat nature. You have your dances ; why do you dance ? Why do you, in fact, smile ? If drink needs suppression, so do the others. If the spirit wants exhilaration, so does the body. We Athenians do not agree with you, for we can drink without making beasts of ourselves. You, Spartans, have no moderation ; why do you not strive for moderation in everything ? "

Now, Plato was not a teetotaller, and he despised teetotallers. The Greeks really thought that eating much was beastly, but drinking was natural, and they always mixed wine with water. When we have seen what Plato suggests, we ask ourselves, what is this question of drink which

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

exercises the minds of two such great countries as England and America? When a teetotaller talks drink he refers to it as a passion by itself. But that is not so, for those who oppose drink are just as fanatical as those who espouse its cause. If people come to the state when they crave for too much drink, it is not because there is a diabolical attraction for it. Do we imagine there could be such an attraction for the wretched stuff that is consumed by ordinary drinkers? No, it is not that, it is simply and solely the lack of amusement that drives them to it. Between the amount of amusement given to a nation, and the quantity of drink consumed by that nation, there is a clear proportion, we might almost say a fixed relation. France seldom drinks to drunkenness, but has plenty of amusement, an abundance of it. It is true they have their absinthe drinkers, but they are confined to a very small proportion of city life.

If we think of the nature of our passions we shall see that it is not superposed but inherent to the soul. It does not work in ordinary life to curb these passions, but it is our duty to educate them. It is not by killing and whipping them to death that we shall gain our ends. When will those temperance and teetotal people of these two great countries learn that their efforts to suppress the excessive drink habit by the methods they adopt are bound to be futile? In England the bicycle has moderated excessive drinking. It

PLATO

has been the greatest foe of the drink traffic, and it has accomplished infinitely more than all the talk of the teetotallers, and in a far more sane and beneficial manner. There are other similar ways of giving amusement, and unless these are resorted to vice and excesses will break out in one form or other, perhaps even in a worse form than drink. Why should not the theatres be opened on Sundays, when the people could go and see such plays as Richard III.? They would go in their thousands to enjoy it. Any one who has seen Richard III. really well played knows what enjoyment it is. It would shake up their vitals and give them something to think over, instead of their going straight away and making beasts of themselves. If we try to beat down their passions and exterminate them, they will take another glass. Passions are indeed the legitimate children of the soul, and they must have an outlet; if we suppress them in one way they will spring up and meet us in another. Let us encourage bicycling, love of the theatre, love of amusement, and the occupation of the temperance and teetotal orators is gone. If we take away the glass of drink from a man and give him nothing else in its place, he will assuredly before long get another glass, and if he cannot get that, he will resort to opium or, what is ten times worse, tea. Let us bear in mind that the passion is from within, it is an organic part of our soul,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

and counteractives of the external order will never exterminate it; they have always failed. The Carthaginians, as we know from ancient history, were nearly absolute teetotallers, and the Romans destroyed them. Neither a Hannibal nor a Hamilcar could save them. England is the least drinking country in Europe, where there are very many who do not drink at all, whereas in France everybody drinks, and yet drunkenness is extremely rife here. Why are there such unsettled opinions on the subject in this country? Is it not necessary to consider this a little, to ponder over it? If there be a doubt in our minds, let us give this passion a benefit of this doubt, but do not let us condemn it wholesale. In this passion we shall find correlation with other passions. If we suppress it it will come out in other ways, it may be in avarice, or religious fanaticism or in a hundred other "isms"; but guide it and educate it, and we shall have it in the beautiful shape of the chariot and the pair of horses under the proper control of a master hand.

This is why we study philosophy, in order that it may give us broader views, and make us see that there is always another side to a question. What we despise need not be altogether condemned; our theories are always liable to be upset, and when this is so, it is tragedy to a man. It may be that we have not properly considered what the nature of passion is. Let us, then, doubt

PLATO

for a few days all our preconceived notions and begin anew to consider out what we have been discussing. Do not let us admit for one moment that the passion for drink is the source of all evil. In one nation we are told it is this, in another that it is something quite different. As a wise French judge once said, "*Cherchez la femme* ;" we really cannot be sure in which direction to look for that source of all evil. In the United States it has been proved beyond cavil by a long article in the journal of the London Statistical Society, that there are a greater number of murderers among teetotallers than even among confirmed drunkards. How can we say after this that drink is the source of all evil ? Such a theory simply cannot be maintained. If some people will still continue to ascribe all crime to drink, let us agree with them, if they will make that drink water, and let us on that account eschew water. Perhaps, it may be said, our notions of passions are entirely wrong ; and we think passions are born to be condemned. We have the passion for amusement here, and there is also the passion for talk (not in England, though), *on parle anglais en se taisant*. But if we measure it all by what Plato says, our passions are part of our human nature. Why, then, should we be ashamed of them ? Let us on the contrary, use them in moderation and under guidance, even if we are forced to revise many of our ideals.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

We come to another passion almost the reverse of what we have been discussing, and it is deliberately selected. It is the passion of avarice. It may appear too sordid and too low. It is not common here in England, except perhaps among the rich, but in France it is a very common passion permeating the whole nation. It is illustrated by Balzac in his "Eugénie Grandet," where Père Grandet is a type of avarice revolting in the extreme, something low and dark. But when we study it by the light of its results we shall find that avarice in France has done an enormous amount of good. A lady, who lived among them and had studied them, said that these French are saved by that besetting passion of theirs. It is the basis of their thrift, and therefore of their cheerfulness; and many of the evils of French Society are counterbalanced by that one great passion. They cultivate, indeed, this Goddess of Thrift to a purpose, and their cheerfulness comes from it, for they rejoice over every *sou* they do not spend, and this habit, on a limited income, obviously makes for the greater sum total of cheerfulness than does a tendency to spend. They get much out of life on very little, and they have, besides, something always to fall back on, however humble the French man or woman may be. The Frenchman with nothing to fall back upon has rarely been seen. And here we have the potent cause of all their cheerfulness,

PLATO

this almost mystical process of the passion of avarice, which professors, who have not seen life, will tell us that it ought to be condemned. But it would be very foolish to do anything of the sort. It is in France the great ventilator of all things, and Society in France could not exist without it. The idea that it is unbearable to part with a single *sou* is of course very pernicious and very low, but every quality and every passion, if viewed by itself, loses its perspective. In Grandet this passion reaches its apotheosis, where he behaved as if he had not a penny.

We shall find new considerations and points from which to view this passion when we read the memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini, with its vivid portrayal of barbarism and genius, whose life was made up of a series of crimes. And so too with the memoirs of Goethe, who went through more than one gust of passion, but when it came to writing it, he watered it down, perfumed it too much, and that is why his chapter on passion is so difficult to understand. Then, again, there is Descartes, who had no passions at all; and we can understand that, as he was brought up by the Jesuits. If we read his "Traité des passions de l'âme," we see the Queen of Sweden, the famous daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, wanting to know from Descartes what is passion. And what was his answer? A very tame one.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Now we pass on to a consideration of the third passion which has been noted for present discussion, the passion of love. Many people are affectionate, but there is no passion in that; the real passion of human love is extremely rare, it represents the diamond of truth. Among animals there is no such thing as passion, and that is why they are animals and look like animals. All animals, however, are specialists, and they so specialize that they can only do one thing at a time. Passion, on the other hand, is sustained; and it is the special privilege of man to have passions. We may think that this is not so, that we know of animals driven by a force which can be no other than passion. Yes, we do see animals angry at periods, it may be at the time of propagation of their species, or it may be a desire for destructiveness, but it is only on the one thing that he specializes, and vents the whole force of his nature. It is not so with man—with him passions are the artistic expressions of his universals. When we touch a man's universal we touch his ruling passion; when we speak of a thing that is of nearest interest to our hearers they become angry. What is it that stirs up an Irishman or a Jew? What makes them at once angry? Why, it is their patriotism, which is so deep; we touch their universals when we speak to them of that. In the English it is their pride. This, then, is the very seed of our

PLATO

distinctive character, compared with animals. To understand passions, we must understand the universals; to understand the universal behind each nation we must find the ruling passions of the individuals of that nation. And so it is that the want of amusements drives people in this country and in America to excessive drinking; in France thrift is behind cheerfulness.

The increment of existence is happiness, and if we lose sight of this we drive our passions into channels we have no right to drive them into. Human beings were meant to be happy, and we have no right to think that we are on the lowest rungs of the ladder; we are not. We are rising, slowly, it may be, but surely, to where we shall have a fuller idea of the truth of being, where the great statue of Truth shall be unveiled to us. Socrates has said that these universals are for the gods alone, that we cannot aspire to the whole truth, but only to a part of it. Who has not heard, in this connection, of the legend of that statue of Isis in Egypt, always veiled over, and it was said that whoever saw that statue would see truth. A young man ventured one night to lift the veil and was found the next morning dead by the statue. He had seen truth, and he could not live. We must not think that we are not meant to see those great things; we are meant to have the light, but it must be slowly and surely. It will not

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

be with sacrilegious hands that we shall tear the veil aside.

Passions, then, are not low ; they are the very direct expressions of these universals, of our souls. What will compare to that great passion which we call patriotism ? Next to God it is the greatest universal behind us. For it man will die over and over again if it be possible. For it he would face the Tamerlanes of Asia. It is to him greater than the love of woman, of art, of knowledge, and a ruling passion which is not ignoble. He will have for it flames of enthusiasm which cannot be curbed. But the highest universal of all behind us is that of God. We have only to touch a man's god and he will bring about such things as inquisitions and *auto-da-fés*. Do not let us shudder at these. Those were times when they took the universals more severely than we do, and all had to go down before it. If that was touched one's whole existence went into a blaze ; love of kindred, country, everything went down before it ; and all because God was their universal.

Is love, then, affection or a passion ? Should we condone it, or treat it with pity ? Should it be cultivated or suppressed ? Is it proper ? Is it something that can be governed ? Let us turn to Plato, and ask him, " What have you said on it ? " We find him discussing it in his " Symposium ; " there we find a series of opinions given, all from different aspects, and finally Socrates

PLATO

winds up the discussion and tells us what he has to say on love. Well, there is Platonic love, but this love of Plato is generally misunderstood. Plato did not mean at all what we understand by the term Platonic love. A young man may love a woman on the pure Platonic plane with absolute passionlessness, but a mature man cannot. Man in his hypocrisy says that he can; but it is impossible. What we mean by Platonic love is out of the question between men and women of mature age, such a thing does not exist. The author has been held up to execration for this view of his from Stratford-on-Avon upwards, but he can afford to smile at these criticisms. What Plato talked about was an ideal love, and that so far from trying to repress our passions we should cultivate them with a *σωφροσύνη*. Other love he spoke about which cannot be treated of here. The pure Platonic *Epos* was of man for man, which to modern ideas is incomprehensible. It was, however, possible between Greek and Greek, such as the love between Socrates and Alcibiades. But when we come to discuss love, What is it? Shall we have it in the form of a myth, or shall we explain it in the satiric vein of Rabelais? In the "Symposium" we have the great Athenian comedian, Aristophanes, explaining by a myth how love originated. Originally man was a four-fold creature, with four arms, and four legs, and four eyes; and he was a round creature, *la nature*

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

ronde, as the French say. He could not only walk and jump, but he could also roll. And this made him so exceedingly arrogant that Jove said he could stand it no longer ; so he flashed forth his lightning and halved him. So instead of four the man became two-legged, with two arms and two eyes, and he could roll no longer. Zeus thus with one stroke doubled his subjects, and one half of man goes about now ever seeking after the other half, and this is Love. We are, every one of us, seeking after our other half. Let us not again be arrogant and bring upon us the wrath of the gods. Perhaps we should again be halved, and then we should all go on one leg only, we should be *monocolists*. There are already some modern *monocolists* who have not even one leg to stand on.

We like to meet certain people because of their affectionate nature. Montaigne was a man of very keen insight ; but when a man asked him why he loved a certain woman he could only reply, "*Je l'aime parce que c'est elle.*" We like to meet a certain person because we like the quality of that person. But it is not the quality we love, it is the personality. Personality is the mightiest of all universals, whether it be in religion or in love ; and it is always a mystery with its antithetically mingled elements in man and woman. So thought the Greeks, who looked upon the gods as for ever endowed with personalities, with the most contrary things united in them.

PLATO

Love with them was an absolute freedom, but it was also an absolute bondage. In loving we are in the realm of liberty, but we are also in the realm of necessity at the same time. We feel we have obtained what we have desired for all time. Women have loved wrongly and have known it, they were perfectly well aware of it. They knew too that they were helpless to avoid it. The desire of their life has been gratified, something has happened; they feel that the universal has come to them.

Spinoza, who never loved, says that love is cheerfulness, bliss, with the idea of the subject that causes it. It is love, in fact, for one's ideal; and surely that man or that woman must feel that they have gained ecstasy when they have reached what they desired. In love it is not quality that we seek after, but it is the personality. What did Frederic Chopin see in Georges Sand? She was plain and not tall; there was nothing interesting about her, and even her unattractiveness was enhanced by the doubtful habit of constantly smoking cigarettes. Yet she could inspire the *Prélude* which Chopin composed on seeing her approach in a garden in Minorca, the greatest piece of music ever compressed into a single page. And we hear too of Alfred de Musset, and hosts of men going crazy over that one woman. What was it that caused it all? It was certainly not her beauty. In this is seen too the wisdom of

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Goethe, who did not select a high-born lady nor a princess, but a simple *bourgeoise*, his Gretchen, rather pretty perhaps, to inspire his mighty genius. What is this mystery of man and woman? It was the very contrasts which gave these men their universals. We see, then, that in that passion we are really seeking for our complements, and it is thus that we supplement our whole existence, though it may be that very few find those complements.

Let us now take an illustration from the other side, that is of beauty in nations. There is no one who has travelled, and has not been struck with beautiful faces in some countries, while they are altogether wanting in others. We shall find beauty in those nations where selection has been left to love and not to money. The Latins are less beautiful than the Anglo-Saxons. If we have been to North Germany, we must have been struck with the angularity, and the lack of charm of the women there. The North German woman is an uncharming person, and why? It has nothing whatever to do with race. The growth of the Hanseatic towns brought great wealth into North Germany, and money-bags married money-bags. The result of it we see in a people of severely plain aspect. It is so that ugliness results.

There are not many money-bags in America, although there are many money-bags in the hands

PLATO

of the few. The Americans are a beautiful race. An American would be insulted if mention is made of a dowry in his wedding arrangements. Hence the American people have become exceedingly beautiful. Then the facilities for divorce presented in the United States is an important factor in the beautification process, giving the people free scope to follow their own personality in the quest of their universal. Love is really at the bottom of it all; not money-bags or race, but love. In France it is the *mariage de convenance*, all a matter of *dot*. The French will always talk of *l'amour*, *l'amour!* but really there is no *amour* among them at all; people generally talk most of what they have not got, and what they do not know. *Amitié*, yes, plenty of it, but not *amour*. Indeed, so rare is *l'amour* in France, that it accounts for the decline of facial beauty of the French woman. In movement it is otherwise; there she excels the woman of other nations. So it was with Rome and Greece, both being ruined by treating marriage as a matter of business, not of love; a secret thing not to be talked about.

Though love is the most serious of all things, the "Laws" and the "Republic" of Plato, the greatest books which treat of everything connected with life, are altogether deficient on that one topic. He says that a woman will marry a man, but he treats the subject quite with a secondary

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

consideration. Here is the reason why the Greeks had no music. The Greek music was not polyphonous like ours, because Greek love was defective, poor, and sometimes altogether absent. Their emotions were thus driven into channels referring to male pursuits. Woman knows she is the cause of music, it is she that inspires it. It was Georges Sand, as we have seen, who made the *Prelude* of Chopin ; without her it would not have been composed.

If we come to modern men we find some who are partly men and partly women. They come near to that ideal of Aristophanes that we have found illustrated in the myth, the ideal of the *nature ronde*. Let us ask them what is the influence of women ? Ought passions to be suppressed ? If we ask Spinoza, he will tell us that he treats passions like geometrical figures. Descartes, with his mistaken notions, thought there were six original passions ; but that is not true, there are but three, and those are cheerfulness, sadness, and desire. Spinoza goes on with his analyses and comes back to these three things, and he says that if we want love, then it must be the big universal. It cannot be woman, then it must be God, and we cannot ask God to love us back again. Is love then altruistic or egoistic, or is it both ? Love forms the substance of philosophy, they are one and the same thing. When Plato takes his highest flights of philosophic

PLATO

thought, he says that love and philosophy are the same thing; and that love is truth. A man loves, and the love becomes incarnate; he feels that his greatest ideal has become flesh. And so every *Aóyos* becomes flesh when it reaches its highest form. What is it, this true and unselfish love? Hegel can never solve it; no Spinoza can solve it. Does it really exist? The only feeling of it is that we have it. But we see this particular kind of love very rarely. To be true and unselfish it must be disinterested or it is not love at all. It must be unconditional, for all universals must be absolute. Such love is extremely rare, and we may never see it, travel as much as we like. People like to love, and think they do so, but is it the kind of love we are describing? François Liszt, when a young man, used to meet great ladies, and, asked if he wished to love a great lady, said, "Well, the great lady will have none of it." Liszt did not believe in it either, for all things ideal are exceedingly rare. He also said, with his accustomed satire, when asked if he had seen one beautiful woman, "*J'en ai vu deux, mais pas pour longtemps,*" "Yes, twice only; but then it lasted only a few months." Ideals cannot be realized altogether. It is quite sufficient if we try to reach them. They are not meant to be completely realized.

The *Eros* of Plato means the love of truth; and it is not made for us. We have that apologue

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

of Lessing, where he said, "If God really had in one hand Truth, and in the other only a desire for Truth, which would you take?" The answer was, "I would fall into his left hand and ask for the desire for Truth, because Truth is, after all, only for God." We do not wish to realize, and we never shall, the Platonic state; but we only wish to desire it, to try to attain to it, and that is sufficient for us. What would life be without passion? It would be a monastery. We have, however, learnt our great lesson from all this discussion of Plato, and that is, not to despise the passions. Surely, if we think ever so lightly, we shall find in us passions for those numerous fads and "isms" which we could set about to reform; it may be an anti-cigarette crusade, or an anti-drink movement. Perhaps we have not begun yet to sift down to the root of things. Let us begin then, but, at any rate, let us give Plato the benefit of any doubt we may have in our minds. We shall then begin to see that, perhaps, after all, we are not quite right in going about the things of this life as we do; perhaps, after all, passions are not such despicable things. We shall find too that if we suppress them they will inevitably break out in some other way. Pent-up passions lead to "isms" and fads; it may be religion, drink, or a hundred other outlets; it is the volcano within us, and we cannot shut it down or extinguish it.

PLATO

Such is the nature of passion, and we shall do very much more for humanity if we try to work for the suppression of the excesses of passion. There are some passions which cannot be expressed too strongly. The man, for instance, who has never loved a woman is no man, and never will be. There he is, with his drawing-room angularity, and his indifference to emotions ; and what does all this lead to ? To nothing but other and ugly passions. Let us not even be uniform, even that is bad, it will not make *un homme, mais une omelette*, without character, without passions. No animal, as we have said, has passions. And it is these passions which make great men and great nations. Great nations have great revolutions. The French have had their great revolution, the English have had theirs, and they are both great nations. The American Civil War was a very great revolution for that country. But have the Austrians and the Germans and the Russians had theirs ? That is the reason why they have never been great, for as the national type is, so is the individual. If we suppress emotions, smother them, deny them expression, what happens ? We know the history of the Redskins. They suppressed all their passions and emotions. They stalked through the streets of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, past magnificent buildings and grand statuary, emotionless and unmoved by astonishment, love, or anything.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

It was a bottle of whisky that transformed and destroyed him. Such is the story of the passions ; and travel, history, and thought all combine to support the view that he who despises passions despises life.

CHAPTER VI

IN order to get a clearer idea of the subject we have been discussing, it is necessary in all our interests, to premise on one or two points which were dealt with in the previous chapter; more especially as the author has been taken to task for certain facts which were given from statistics which were beyond question.

Now, stammering is held to be a sign of solidity in thinking, and when a statement of fact is made it is by some held to be wrong if the person who made the statement did not stammer. If, in fact, such people do not agree with the inference that is drawn from facts of unquestionable accuracy, they at once come to the conclusion that the facts had not been considered very carefully. It was stated in the last chapter that the number of homicides committed by teetotallers in the United States in a given period was greater than the number committed by drunkards. This statement has been disputed by a "scholar of Portobello Road" in a letter to a paper, and the inference drawn from the facts is said to be absurd. That some care was taken

THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

in arriving at the inference will be evident by a perusal of the records of the Royal Statistical Society of 1892, wherein will be found the statistics showing that in 1890 in the United States the murders committed by drunkards was slightly over nineteen per cent., while those committed by teetotallers was over twenty per cent. Forty per cent. are accounted for thus, and there is nothing to show to what class the remaining sixty per cent. of the numbers belonged. The clear inference from this is that drink is not the source, much less the chief source, of all crime. A man, as a rule, commits a crime from reasons which are quite independent of the question of drink ; there may be many motives, avarice being often one of the great incentives. It may be stated, then, that when a statement of fact has been made in these chapters, be it ever so broadly, that fact has been ascertained with the very greatest care.

Another point raised by the discussion the last time was the question of generalization. One thing is quite clear, and this is stated with no sense of recrimination, that if we cannot generalize on a subject, we cannot think of that subject at all. This is the one principle to which we must devote our special attention, for it has been said that it is absurd to generalize on man or woman. Nothing is truer than that thinking is thinking in universals, and that if we have not obtained a knowledge of the universal we cannot have a

PLATO

knowledge of the particular. If we cannot generalize on man or woman, then it is a pity to waste our time in paying any attention to what philosophy or psychology may teach us. We may find man more easy to generalize on than woman ; the latter is so volatile, so wonderful that we cannot generalize on her quite so easily. Perhaps it would be well to prop up one's views on generalization with the views of a man who was a deep thinker and was also a perfect gentleman, a man who never forgot his *bonhomie* and who invariably gave his own views in his books with the utmost modesty, so much so that he actually pointed out his own mistakes, and was honest enough to show where his inferences might be at fault. It was quite touching, the way in which Charles Darwin left to students to work out his great idea of generalization. In his famous book, "The Origin of Species," which is easy to understand and as light as down, he tries to generalize, but before he begins to generalize on plants, on stones, on animals, he first goes to the expert breeders and gardeners and botanists, and collects all the information he can as to what they had to say and had experienced in their particular line. It is the expert growers of the "ribstone pippin" or the "jargonelle," the expert breeders of the "shorthorns" that, Darwin says, are the most refractory to any sort of generalization ; and yet it is Darwin who has convinced us in the "Origin

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

of Species " that the several breeds and species are all descended from one and the same parent stock. If Darwin has not made all his points clear he has at least made one point clear, and that is that we can generalize. As an example, let us take the case of a diamond, that beautiful and brilliant stone, and the hardest known substance. It is totally different from the lead of a lead pencil which we reduce to powder when we sharpen it. Both again differ from a piece of coal which we burn in our grates. In the year 1750 several chemists had an idea that there was a universal behind all this, and it was left to Scheele to prove that the diamond, the lead, the coal were all one and the same thing ; all modifications of the one parent substance, carbon.

In the earlier days of science such men as Gesner wrote huge folios on the various subjects which went to make science ; but science in the future, instead of becoming more discursive, will become more condensed. The tendency will be for fewer and smaller books, as we gradually tend towards reducing many things to one universal. Science is really only a progress in mental stenography by means of generalizations. We are told that the man who generalizes is frequently mistaken, and becomes paradoxical. Let us at once admit that this is so. But the prouder a person is, the more self-assertive he is, and the more adverse to all ideas of generalization in matters human, so much the more unlikely is he to reach

PLATO

the universal. Such a man naturally thinks himself a cosmos, a universe to himself, and is therefore averse to looking for any other universal behind him. But there are others too, not so self-intoxicated, who think that there is very much in it, and they are not so much averse to this feeling of generalizing; a feeling that overrules them. It may take a long time, but in the end it must prevail, and this feeling is of something, the universal behind them. Darwin thus generalized in the animate world, and Scheele in the inanimate, in a way that Plato had despaired of doing. Things that Descartes, in the seventeenth century, said could never be generalized are now being taught daily in the elementary schools. Without this generalization philosophy becomes only a pleasant chat about things that neither he that talks nor he that listens can possibly understand. If therefore we mean to proceed with philosophy in its true sense, we must start with the idea that we can generalize. We may perhaps find it difficult to generalize on stones. We may find it still more difficult to generalize on plants. But generalization is above all very difficult when we come to the human heart which has more monsters in it than all the seas, more flowers in it than all the gardens, and more stars in it than all the heavens. That generalization is difficult does not mean that it is *per se* absurd or impossible. Let us then

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

try to generalize, but let us also at the same time try to avoid falling into errors.

Careful generalization could do much even on the subject of love which is the most complicated and the most mysterious of all subjects. It is well illustrated by the famous myth of Plato on the origin of love. Love, he says, is the unity of the universal and the particular. That in itself is bewildering, and we rack our brains to find out how we can reconcile this combination of the two extremes of egoism and altruism ; the love of man for woman, of parent for child, of man for state, the love of music, art, etc. Is it egoistic or altruistic, or is it a mixture of both ? It is difficult to decide what is the truth about it, but we have it given to us by Plato in his myth in the "Symposium." It is greater than anything Schopenhauer could write. The only modern writer who might have written of it as well as Plato did was Nietzsche. He had the charm and style of Plato ; his German was absolutely unique ; his writings are as blocks of chiselled marble which he shies at us ; but he was unfortunately mad. And his insanity took the peculiar form of misogyny. This being so we must turn our attention at once to Plato's myth of the origin of love. There was Aphrodite, celebrating her birthday with great festivities. The gods and goddesses were all there, drinking nectar and eating ambrosia, and among them was Poros.

PLATO

All was excellent, they ate and they drank, they sang and they danced. They then went into the garden, where Poros (Abundance), who had become a trifle too uneasy with his feasting and was heavy with divine drink, lay himself down to sleep. There then came along a ragged, wretchedly dressed woman named Penia (Penury); and she thought to herself that where all these festivities had been going on she might get something to eat and to drink. So she passed into the house unnoticed, and having satisfied her wants in food and drink, she walked out into the garden. Now this woman, though poor and ragged, was very beautiful. Poros awoke, saw her and met her, and the offspring of their love was Eros. And by this myth Plato would teach us that love is the offspring of the two extremes, godlike abundance and the beggarly lack of everything—of Plenty and Penury. It illustrates the largeness demanded by love in all things; a generous, wholesome amplitude, nothing mean, small, or narrow. It is through the mouth of Diotima, the prophetess of Mantinea, that Plato tries to teach these great truths of love. It is from the mouth of this virgin priestess that Socrates extracts the deepest secrets of this mysterious passion, thus indicating the extremely delicate nature of the subject.

In all our greatest literature, in the literature of the Germans and others, we find poets instinctively following the lines of Plato's myth, in this

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

idea of love as an immense thing that questions not nor specifies. It is always a rich man, high up in the social scale, who loves the ordinary *bourgeoise*. Goethe excelled in the portrayal of this, where he contrasted the wealthy Faust with the simple Gretchen. Here was the love of Faust as that of Poros, and beside it the love of Helen of Sparta becomes a very tedious thing. When Goethe became old we do not find the same charm in his writings; he had lost this touchstone of nature in his "Egmont." Shakespeare did not give to love such fine expression as Goethe, because his lovers, Romeo and Juliet, unlike Faust and Gretchen, were on the same plane; they were too respectable. When Romeo loves Juliet there is no Poros and no Penia. It is all thoroughly respectable, they must first go to church. And so, in order to bring out the passions, external difficulties have to be created, such as the feud between the two families; that is, false difficulties are put in the way of love to create a path for passion. It is not so with Goethe, for when Faust loves Gretchen he meets a tiny little *bourgeoise*, and then it is that we see the full force of passion. This is the true touchstone, which brings out the full chord and inspires the music of Gounod. Others will write music to the same theme, as it is truth and not fictitious circumstances that will ever inspire music. And no music will ever exhaust that love of Faust and Gretchen, it is

PLATO

so unspeakably simple. He loves her, and the contrast is there. The contrast need not be a social one, but there must be a contrast.

Schopenhauer came to the conclusion that a man loves a woman on account of the child, and he says this is his own original idea; he thought himself the intellectual centre of the world. But we have this self-same idea given to us by Plato in the most open fashion; that man wants immortality in the flesh, so he marries, because his child is to him immortality. He likes contrasts, and children were given a medium of qualities by the union of contrasts; by the union of Poros and Renia we have the true offspring Eros, the essence of love. Do we not see such contrasts attracting each other, in the passion of the dark-haired for the blonde, in the northerner for the southerner, in those with bad teeth for those with good teeth? It is not necessarily a contrast in social standing, but an inner contrast. We find it exemplified in the finest poem of Heine, this longing of the northern men for southern women. It is the spruce of the north dreaming of the palm-tree of the south; and it strikes the keynote of the poem of nature. The more we think of it the more we see that in the myth of Plato there is the real essence of love.

It is seen too in the familiar phenomenon of the love of a very young man for a woman much older than himself. We have an example of this

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

in the famous love of Napoleon for Josephine, when he was twenty-six and she thirty-four, though, of course, she said she was only twenty-nine. Where is Poros, where is Penia, here? One Frenchman went so far as to say, "*Cet enfant se souvient de sa nourrice*," but there are other reasons without our accepting that one. Let us constantly keep before our minds that somewhere, if we look for it, there is a Poros, somewhere a Penia. A young man recalls the tenderness lavished on his childhood, which in this country he loses too soon. In England, early youth is passed in training for the responsibilities of the State, and the young man leads, as it were, a solitary life without coming in contact with women of his age. Consequently his emotions are suppressed. Thus, when he meets a young girl who ought to be his supplement, he finds in her too much of the abundance of youth; her brightness, her brisk life, and her vivacity overwhelm and shock him. What he wants is something more calm, some one more *tranquille*, which can only be got from older women. The young girl is too Poros, her abundance of youth is a shock to him! Here there is disproportion, and he immediately goes and falls in love desperately with a woman of thirty or thirty-five.

One of the generalizations leading from this is that man invariably loves one and the same type of woman. She may change in colour, face, or

PLATO

stature, but it will always be the same type that he will love, even if he loves three or four times. The same nature it will be, with the same attractions, which will be the complements to his own nature. If we want to find an example of this generalization leading to the understanding of universals there is no better illustration than in music, which is the philosophic exponent of all arts. Thus, the scale is the universal, the bar is the particular. If we catch the essence of all the scales, we know that we are generalizing ; and the lack of interest in generalizing is the cause of our lack in the knowledge of musical universals, or the passion for music. Thus we find all great composers having predilections for certain keys. Schumann, when he wanted to denote the most mysterious emotions, always did it in G minor. He was mad on it, and he composed his most passionate things in this key. Beethoven, on the other hand, preferred F major, or D minor, its complement.

And so it is that in his sentiments man follows one type. He may change as he grows older, his tastes may become more refined ; but if we want to generalize we will find that the woman a man loved when he was young was of the same type as the woman he loves when he is old. And why should this be so ? Because in love there is the attraction of one of the greatest and holiest of universals, which is personality. A personality could

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

only be one. To conceive of more than one has never been known. We all want to have the bliss of reaching this one thing, this personality which is the basis of all love. Passions and sentiments are good, but not when they are excessive and all-absorbing as illustrated by Balzac in his "Cousine Bette," where we see the terrible cruelty of being driven by an all-absorbing passion. He tells us all this with his sublime love of truth that, although the legitimate wife of the hero was infinitely more beautiful than the other women he ran after, still he was driven on and on by his passions, by the excessive force of that sentiment called lust, to such an extent as never to be satiated. It is precisely so with men who are excessively proud. It is not love but passion that drives them. Just in this way were the Prussians driven by pride. Never were they so cocky as after that memorable day of Jena when Napoleon broke them into fragments.

We are not speaking of these passions when held in moderation, when they are passions indeed, and we may be proud of them. Such passions indeed make the most of life, they make history. They are better than the passion which cares only for personalities; better than the passion which fanatics call the love of God when they only love themselves, and call those who are driven by such passions saints, which is all very dubious. There is such a thing as the love of God,

PLATO

for we find Diotima saying, "I will bring you to the greatest of all secrets, to the knowledge of the greatest of all personalities, which is God." And this holy passion is so absorbing that it needs no return. According to the sacred words of Spinoza, if we love God we must not wish Him to love us. Goethe too expresses the same sentiments, though from an opposite extreme, *wenn Ich dich liebe, was geht dich an?* I love you, why do you trouble about it? But in whatever way we look at love we find that that great passion wants the combination of great universals. We feel convinced that love is that great desire for personality which will not be satisfied until we reach the essence of all—the Highest. And the essence of philosophy is the ideal, whilst we have only the desire for the ideal.

It is a sad note to strike ; but there is no denying the fact that English people are all hopeless and incorrigible optimists ; the Germans are great pessimists, and the Italians are perhaps greater pessimists than the Germans. The Italian poetry of Leopardi is even a worse philosophy in pessimism than that of Schopenhauer is in prose. What about the love of other men, of humanity and of other nations ? We hear people talking of this universal love among nations and love of humanity in general, but such a thing is impossible. The most sacred religions teach us that we should love others as we love ourselves ; but no,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

such a thing cannot be. There are more students of history than there are philosophers, and there is no historical support to such an ideal being ever possible. No Greek has ever said that such a thing was possible or to be desired. If he had he would have been laughed to scorn in the market-place of Athens, though every Greek did for other men more than for themselves. If they had our way of expressing these things they would call them Oriental exaggerations and impossibilities. Plato never assumed that wars would cease, for warriors were indispensable in his ideal State. If any one had talked to him of the Utopia of eternal peace he would probably have left the room. He would think that it was not only not possible, but not even desirable; that, in fact, it could not be accomplished. If love is really the desire of unity of one's self with personality, then such an ideal is out of the question. There is no honesty in politics, no, there is no truth or honesty in international courtesies or relations, and there never will be. At the bottom of the heart of every nation there is much need of a great hatred, as there is of great love; and if they have not this hatred they will make it. Hatred is thought to be the opposite of love, but it is not so; it is really a sort of love. The opposite of love is ambition, and when a man or woman is seized by ambition love disappears. The arrival of ambition means a cold douche on

PLATO

all love. Many men after forty or forty-five, and women after twenty-five or thirty, lose love and acquire ambition, they become what the French call *des arrivistes*. There is that story of Bismarck and Pauline Lucca. It was Bismarck who said, "I have had many passions in my life and they were like lions in strength, but finally the lion of ambition ate up the others. I do not love Pauline as much as my ambition; I would like to, but I cannot." He left this world without having loved more than his wife. So we see that ambition, when it sets in, will freeze out the last sparks of love.

Now let us consider another sort of passion which is exceedingly powerful, and that is, the passion for amusement. The upper class is held to be decidedly frivolous, and, truly, amusement can go far to the abuse of all our higher qualities. But where nations come to grief, with reference to amusements, is in the lack of them. Instances of this will be found in the Corsicans, who have their vendetta; in the Mainates, the alleged direct descendants of the Spartans. These latter live in towers in their villages, constantly armed. Here they live for years, and, perhaps, never leave them, and they will shoot down any one they think was guilty of an insult to one of their ancestry, it may be a hundred and fifty years ago. Prosper Mérimée had expert knowledge of the life of these people, and his novels are the best dealing with the subject. In his story of *Colomba* he tells us

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

of the girl who moved heaven and earth to carry out her vendetta, and to kill the man who had insulted her family. With these people this is but the ricochet work of their passion, and why, we ask, does it break out in vendetta ? Because they are so utterly lazy ; it comes from their doing absolutely nothing, and, in consequence, brooding over their imagined wrongs, until they become like the vulture that eats out the liver of the famous mythical hero. If they were given something to do, something to distract them and make their life active, all their vendetta would automatically disappear, as it has already disappeared from Central Italy, where it was at one time also prevalent. We should, of course, then have no such thrilling stories as "The Corsican Brothers."

Again, the Spaniards are the most sagacious of nations. They have an amazing power of language, and have been very great in their day. Why have they their bull-fights ? These are ghastly spectacles, watched by thousands of men and women. There is nothing elevating about them ; perhaps even the bulls have been drugged, and are thus trained to the fight, and undersized ones too are selected. But whether it be death to the bull or to the toreador, this terrible sight is witnessed by thousands of eager people, with eyes jutting out of their faces. The cause of all this is laziness, and nothing else. Let them have an enterprising life, let mines and railways be

PLATO

opened up, and these bull-fights will at once disappear. The Hungarians have no bull-fights, but they have their dances. Their laziness has an outlet in their violent dance, the Csárdás. This is different to the dance in England, which a Hungarian would look upon as a melancholy polishing of the floor. The inane dancing at the "Empire" and the "Alhambra" is a proof of the insipidity of the amusements which satisfy the English people, for a nation which is very active does not require its amusements to be very violent or excessive. While in Corsica, in Sardinia, where they have nothing to do, it is cayenne that they want, and they take it in excessive amusements. Travellers will tell us these people are uncivilized. When we go to Spain and admire anything, we are told it is all ours ; it may be a person's watch, or his country, or his buildings. It is the lazy habit of theirs, the ricochet effect of sentiment where they want something to amuse them.

Each nation must have its opium, and we ask ourselves what do these people really pay for their indulgence in this species of an opiate ? In England "isms" take the place of the dance and the bull-fight. In America it is themselves ; the idea of their own greatness is their opium ; and everything is always "all right." If we were to say half as much as this in America we would never say the other half. The Italians have

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

their Tarantella, which is simply a ghastly dance. They have nothing whatever to do, so they put into their imagination all sorts of horrors. It is not for us to condemn all these things, but to strive to see what is their correlation. Let the English go and open up mines and railways in Spain, and they would automatically kill the bull-fights, instead of subscribing money for their suppression as they do now. Similar occupations would make the Csárdás, the Tarantella, and the vendetta disappear. The passions are the essential features of humanity, and it is our duty to try and get at the root of them. The causes of the passions being diverted into wrong channels in the cases we have been discussing, are laziness, inertia, disgust of work ; and having found the causes, and the correlations they give rise to, we should not find it difficult to apply the remedies.

We now approach another question, What is the relation between age and passion ? Does passion cease with age ? Historically speaking it does not. Horace Walpole once asked this question of a great French lady of mature years, and her reply was, "*Monsieur ! il faut s'adresser aux dames plus vieilles que moi.*" This lady was not only *d'un certain âge*, but *d'un âge certain*. The question then arises, has mature age no passion ? Yes, it has ; but there are passions of kinds, some are warm and some are cold. It is the colder passions which belong to mature age ; and they

PLATO

are envy, jealousy, avarice, vanity, the love of domination. These go through all ages, and the older we get the deeper get the channels of these particular passions, because then our passions are narrowed down to these few. In age men do not dream of every nice woman nor of a poem, their passions get restricted to a love of domination. All the sages continue to tell us to govern ourselves and to let others alone, for they see the evils of domination. It will never do in philosophy to make observations on ourselves; to get at the true relation of things we must deal with masses. So, with regard to domination, our best example will be in the popes, the great majority of whom were men of very mature years, perhaps between fifty-five and sixty-five years of age. What do we find in them but the strongest passion for domination. It is ambition pure and simple, whatever may be the *sous-entendus* or the side issues connected with their history. There is the history of Gregory VII., one of the most celebrated of the popes, who died in 1085; though feeble and broken-down in health he refused to give in when deposed by the Emperor, but retaliated by excommunicating him and compelling him to do penance. We have Blücher doing great deeds at Waterloo at the great age of seventy-three. We have, too, the record of the terrible enmity of the old Venetian Doge who was blinded by the Byzantine Emperor, and swore he would not die

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

till he had taken the tower of Constantinople. His passion for revenge was gratified when, at the age of ninety, he was the first to be hoisted up the battlements of that great city in the hour of victory. With regard to love, to say that old age has no passions is untenable. We would not like to say that a woman of fifty or sixty could not love as madly as a woman of twenty. It is true that she hates the idea of being ridiculous, but the subject is an extremely delicate one, and we do not know how to generalize upon it. As to the passion of envy, it knows no age whatever ; we have it in the very young, and it is very marked as we grow older.

In America the majority of people are not old. It is one of the first things which strikes a traveller, who is received there with all urbanity, suavity, and the joyousness of youth. He looks upon it as an extraordinary fact that the bulk of the American people should be so young, somewhere between twenty and forty-five. In Spain on the other hand, though in their great *politesse* they will hand over everything to a stranger, still all is sombre and imbued with the spirit of age. In fact the reason for the existence of the dark passion in Spain is to be found in there being so many old people there, and they are all so old-fashioned too in their ideas. If we travel in Germany we shall find the ordinary German peasant so unyielding, and this is because all

PLATO

passion is absolutely frozen up in him. Whether we be young or old these are all matters worthy of our study ; they are matters, too, worthy of the careful study of the legislator. For it is only by such careful study of the causes and effects of passion, and of the correlations of the passions with the ordinary action of life that we can hope to remedy their excesses and defects, and so to direct and control them to the ultimate good of the nation and of humanity.

Plato, in the seventh book of his "Laws," makes his famous remarks about games and amusements. He says these are most important things to consider in the well-being of a child ; and that if amusements are not perfectly regulated the State will go to pieces. What is the practice with us in this subject ? We are continually, day after day, throwing new toys, made in Germany, at the heads of our children. And this is positively absurd, for it leaves no scope for the imagination of the child to have any play. Plato is very precise about this. What he says is that it is a psychological error to give any toys to a child, as every child will invent his own toy. A twig will do for him, and with this he will make a king or a giant. It is absolutely true that the chief reason of the French Revolution was the entirely changed nature of the games of the French children which was brought about thirty or forty years before the Revolution took place. And this

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

change was largely due to the publication of Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe," which was devoured by the children of France, causing them to change their thoughts and ideas. It was this that made the Dantons, the Robespierres, the Mirabeaus, of the Revolution. Our historians do not go to the bedrock of psychological causes and effects. If they did they would find it all in the letters and memoirs of the time, in those of Galiani, of Mdme. D'Epinay. It is the latter who says, in one of her letters, "Who is this Crusoé that I saw all the children playing at, this Crusoé?"

Let us then be very careful how we deal with these excessive passions of ours. Let us study them in the first place, and let us at the same time try to generalize about them. If we allow ourselves to be influenced by the general condemnation of everything connected with the passions, and give a ready ear to what any faddist will tell us, then there is not much to talk about or much hope for us. We should be finally convinced in our minds that the subject, and how we deal with it, has a very great social importance, for Sociology is the natural complement of philosophy.

It is difficult to scrutinize fads that have been in vogue at different times and to deduce the effects they have produced on a nation. For strange effects have strange causes. What gave

PLATO

most English families of the upper classes the gout in the eighteenth century was the treaty of 1703 with Portugal, which allowed the heavy wines of Portugal to come into the country and to become cheaper than the French wines. The wines were much too heavy and ill-suited to the climate. *Hinc illae lachrymae!* So, too, with the treaty with France of 1860 there came in again the light French *ordinaires* to counteract the mischief done. To study these subjects in connection with human passions will do more good than condoning with the ill-effects of wrongly directed desires and fads. It is always difficult to find the right thing, but it is within the power of all of us to strive after it. If in reading Plato we do not quite understand him, we will yet learn one thing from him ; if we have evils he will show us what those evils are due to. If we try to make the Corsican, for instance, more active, the vendetta will cease. We shall not succeed in changing the character of nations by preaching, but we shall assuredly do so by giving them activity. Apart from the purely philosophical standpoint, there is also the social reason why we should strive in all we do, and in the way we do it, for the good of humanity.

CHAPTER VII

WE next come to the subject of Art, and we ask what are the most essential features to be found with regard to Art in the philosophy of Plato? Every one who has studied Plato knows that he is shy of definitions. It is a sign of *dilettante*-ism to ask constantly for definitions; they are always such dangerous and incomplete things. If we cannot with ease express things or explain their meaning, how can we crystallize them in a definition? Now, Plato is in earnest in everything he does and says, and especially with reference to this subject of Art; and he says that it is possible to tell even what Art is in a definition. He illustrates it, he expresses it in all sorts of ways, and he forms ideas about it which are some of the deepest secrets of Plato. His ideas were not altogether new; they must have been in the minds of many Greeks of his time and before him. But in him they developed as ideas which were greater than his own mind, and ultimately that mind of his gave them shape; a mind that was artistic enough to grasp their full significance and to give them expression.

PLATO

He it is who is the originator of the doctrine of ideas, and that doctrine has become famous and worthy of study; and it has occupied the minds of philosophers and the greatest thinkers for centuries. What is this doctrine of ideas? We have such things as longitude, quantity, quality, and they are all forms of ideas, but these are not what Plato meant when he talked of ideas. It may seem somewhat of an arid subject to go fully into the meaning of Plato, but it is necessary to try and get at that meaning, and when we have made it clear to our minds, it will help us in the end to know the true relation which art bears to philosophy. We shall know then what real art is, it will help us in the enjoyment of art, and we shall be able to give our judgment on the different phases of art.

Art is indeed one of the greatest phenomena of the world. It is art in its highest sense that we are dealing with. The notion entertained by Puritans and some others that it was mere enjoyment or pleasure, or something that tickled our nerves and lent itself to all sorts of forbidden representations, is too puerile to be discussed. It is the most serious of things, and also totally human. The charm of Nature is very great, but it is not art; but with us humans it is our proper demesne, and we are never more at home than we are in art. To us art is the greatest of all consolations, and we are never weary of it; for

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

we feel that we are participating in the highest of all forces, the creative force. In art we are being impelled by the great creative force behind us. Creation was not the work of a moment. Nature is constantly being created and recreated out of nothing ; she is ever unfolding, recurring, progressing. And that great force which has created and is incessantly creating all around us, we instinctively feel is within us when we are dealing with art.

Art is not confined only to music and painting and sculpture ; although these are great expressions enabling us to reach out to the ideal. Art means anything which has a system. Philosophy is an art, an art of concepts, where we put rhythm and cadence into our thoughts, and thus form them into a system. We do with philosophy precisely as we would with blocks of marble ; we give them a delicate chiselling of a line or a curve, and they begin to live. And so it is with tones ; it is by the systematic handling of them that we make music. It may, again, be a novel or a drama. Anything, then, which we have formed in such a manner that we have given to it rhythm and cadence and shape, is art. This is the wide side of art, and it is in this sense that we shall discuss it.

Between nature and ourselves there is something we can never bridge over ; we can never read all there is hidden in her great book. We

PLATO

can spell out a few words from it; a poet, a few words; a painter, a few more; a philosopher or thinker, perhaps some more; but what is it after all? What we long for is something human. We can read, or as so often happens, misread the human face; but between humans something goes from one to another which makes them understand each other. And that is what we meant when we said in a previous chapter that we shall never understand plants. Botanists have studied and classified their every detail; their leaves, their stems, their growth; but there are hundreds of phenomena connected with them which they can never analyze or understand. But when it comes to humanity, and we are dealing with the human soul, it is in art, which is our special demesne, where we understand the most. There is much in all this to learn from the criticism of Diderot. There is Ruskin, too, with his criticism of art, and he was not groping on the surface, but went down to the bottom of things. From these and other great thinkers who have written on the subject, we really have an understanding of what is meant by humanity and by art. In this sense we shall understand human beings, but never plants.

What we want particularly to cultivate is the art of living; the art of making people happy with themselves; the art of meeting people and talking to them; the art of saying the right thing in the

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

right time and place. How often do we hear people say, "How poorly you look," and yet there is an art in meeting a person when he was looking poorly and making him feel that he was looking well. This art of conversation, this art of living is very rarely practised. It was the art of meeting people, this urbanity of theirs which distinguished the Athenians. They really made an art of living, of talking, of receiving people; and this art we find in every line of Plato. It is the art of putting people at their ease, the *savoir vivre*, the *savoir faire*. It is this art of living that is much needed with us in modern times, and we ought to introduce and cultivate it. We shall then be able to understand art in its many other aspects.

Art is thoroughly human, and altogether anti-Nature. There is not a trace of art in Nature. Nature is interesting, it is weird, but it has no art and no music. The finest nightingale gives only strange, weird notes, but it has not a song, and no real music. It has been said that the nearest approach to music in Nature was when water dropped down from a height on to a rock, and produced a sound which was equivalent to a C major chord. We have excellent notes in the voices of many birds, but no real chord of music. And again, what we call real painting does not exist in Nature. Leonardo da Vinci, in his great treatise on painting, has treated fully of all the

PLATO

laws of perspective, and has gone nearest to showing that Art and Nature are synonymous terms, but though he is very great, he does not convince us. The charm of nature is of a totally different type, but it is not art. Art is really hyper-nature, it is something we give to nature; it is neither imitation nor rivalry, but it is the work of our own soul, and the greatest consolation of all consolations. When everything fails, art will not fail us. The consolation of art is absolute, and it leaves its indelible traces; it is besides immensely serious. The people who have no sense of art are to be pitied, their life is not worth living. They fail in the expression of their soul; and to gain this they must have a deep feeling for art. Leibniz said that we have shown greater ingenuity in our games and in our arts than we have done in the more serious things of life. And this is perfectly true. There is the game of chess; it is a greater invention than anything in technics; no mechanical genius, no inventor has given such proof of skill, has shown so much art as the inventor of chess.

What then is Art, if it is not Nature, and if it is not the imitation of Nature? The answer, which is almost complete, and which has satisfied the deepest thinkers is given by Plato. His charm is the charm of an artist. He is as great in what he says as in what he does not say. In

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

modern times philosophers are great in what they do not say, because it is the only thing in which they are correct. Plato, on the other hand, gives us real artistic effect by the innuendoes of his thought. It is as music is eloquent not only by its *crescendi* and its *diminuendi*, but also by its pauses; everything, in fact, is a part of the music; not only the basses and the trebles, but also the pauses. In the "Symposium" of Plato we find a series of men talking one after another, it may be a doctor, or it may be a man of another profession, but we never find him talking of esoteric mysticism. He is only mystic in the books of modern professors, where nobody can understand him. On the contrary, he is as clear and as naïve as he can be, and a child can understand him, he is so simple. Plato had a deep sense of what art was. We never find him in a *faux pas*, or bad taste, or even a slight failing in taste, which is really the soul of art. He is even particular as to the outward form of his writings. The outward dressing of his Dialogues is a perfect piece of art. It is sometimes a street, or a wood, or some public place; but the artistic background is always there, giving to his word-pictures and thoughts a setting which carried with it a dramatic effect of its own. With all this we at once say that such a man must have felt what art was. Though it is not as a professional artist that we expect to deal with him, yet it is strange that he

PLATO

does not even discuss the subject of art. We think this strange, indeed, in a man who adumbrated Gothic architecture. Before such an architecture was known he told us of his ideal State, which was to have only one architecture, and his anticipation was that of the Gothic and no other. In the same way as he anticipated the Roman Catholic Church, so he anticipated the art of the Roman Catholic Church, which is represented by Gothic architecture. Again, we find Plato never talks of the Parthenon in his writings. That consummate work of art on the Acropolis, in all its lustre and grandeur, and with all the subtle meaning which appealed to the Greek mind; that work adorned with exquisite friezes and metopes, which he saw daily, and which could be seen as far away as the island of Delos, he never even mentions it. We see portions of these grand marbles, which were brought away by Lord Elgin, and are now in the British Museum, and even now their charm is extraordinary. What must have been the feelings they engendered in the Athenians? And yet Plato never says a word about them! This reminds one of Leonardo da Vinci, who never speaks of the ancient beauties of the Greeks, except by mere allusion. These men were, indeed, so full of these unutterable beauties of the ancients that it seemed superfluous to them to talk about them.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Let us then ask Plato what he can do for us in the matter of art. To avoid being misunderstood he gives us a definition of art. It is the manifestation in the material world of Platonic ideas ; and by ideas we do not mean merely concepts or thoughts. These ideas do not manifest themselves ordinarily, nor are they on the surface. For instance a table is only a representation of an idea, and not the idea itself ; and it is the manifestation of the Platonic idea which is art. It is the process of that idea becoming flesh, the incarnation of something very ideal. And when it becomes flesh, then it is that it becomes art. Let us say, for instance, that the divine idea did manifest itself in a beautiful woman. It may be for only one month or one hour, when she is the expression of the idea of beauty ; it is beauty manifesting itself in the flesh. And so we may have goodness, mind, intellect, all Platonic ideas which may take on flesh, and then they become art. If Plato's ideas do not mean quantity, number, grandeur, statues, what is it that he does mean ? The nature of this idea was shown in Plato's beautiful allegory of the men working in the mines at Syracuse. It was when he was at the court of the tyrant Dionysius that he was shown parts of the town and then he was taken to the quarries from whence comes marble even to the present day. There he found people who had committed crimes immured and chained to the

PLATO

walls in narrow galleries, and just free enough to work, though not able to turn round. It was this ghastly spectacle that recurred to him when writing in his " Republic," and explaining what he meant by the original archetype of things. " Imagine," says he, " a cave, a very deep cave, and in it a fire; also a window very high up from which only a little light comes, throwing certain shadows on the opposite wall; here are these slaves chained to the wall for years and to them these shadows are the only signs of life or picture of what is going on outside, until at last those shadows became like living things to them, they dangled before them like a Punch and Judy show, and they ultimately took them for living things. It was the only amusement for these prisoners, but where the shadows came from they knew not; and so they got to look upon them as living things. That all this was a mere optical reflex, did not occur to them; and so they began to teach their children about these shadows. One day a philosopher comes to the cave and says to them, these are not realities but merely shadows, and only reflections of what is beyond through that window. After much discussion, they cry that the philosopher is a fool, an idiot. All philosophers are idiots—so long as we do not quite understand them. Finally he leads them out of the cave into the broad daylight, and here the light is so strong after the darkness they have lived in that they

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

cannot see. At last they get used to the light by degrees, and the philosopher goes to the upper window and shows them the figures that have been played off, that what they saw in their cave were only the shadows of shadows. Then he shows them men and women as they pass by, and these, he tells them, are the real things. The men from the cave are then bewildered, the reality to them is totally different from what they imagined, and they smile aloud as it were in their joy." This, then, is the simple allegory of Plato whereby he is trying to teach us how life as we know it in the shadows is but a shadowing of the real, the ideal life.

Let us imagine again the picture of a man or a woman we have drawn on a plain piece of paper of two dimensions, stepping out of the paper into a world of three dimensions of infinitely greater intensity and volume where it has not only length and breadth, but also depth and space where it can move about. What happens to that picture is precisely what happens to us when we study philosophy. Something tells us that what we find is not really the thing. We are like the cave-dwellers. We ask where the light comes from, and we are told this is the source of light, it is the sun. And it is the play of the light which gives us the shadows, and if we had no light we should have no shadows. Every man and woman, then, has behind them something

PLATO

that is the reality, and that something Plato calls his ideas. So a good man has the idea of goodness behind him. What he possesses is not perfect, complete goodness. Behind all his incomplete goodness there is *the* goodness, which is the idea of all special goodness. It is the same thing with beauty. A man or woman may be beautiful, and we say, yes, she has fine lines and curves, but she lacks colour. Now, where is that archetype of beauty in which all the ideal lines and colour occur? Plato says we must not despair of finding it, for there is such a thing—*τὸ καλόν*—which is behind all the specially beautiful things of life. Is it to be found on earth? No, is the answer; for on earth are only shadows.

In his "Phædon," Plato admits that imperfect things exist on earth. There is incomplete goodness, also incomplete beauty. If, then, incomplete goodness and imperfection have existence, we cannot assume that perfection and completeness have not. If imperfection does exist, how then can perfection be so imperfect as not to exist? Hence we have the ontological proof of the existence of God. And it was this ontological proof and argument which was formulated by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, somewhere about the beginning of the twelfth century, and again by Descartes in the seventeenth century. It is the Platonic idea, that if the imperfect exists, the perfect must also exist; it is a very

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

hard nut to crack, and we cannot get over the truth of it. The ideas are all there, and before giving them a *locus* we must admit that they are somewhere, though we cannot always express them or locate them. It is like comparing two languages and finding that certain ideas are the same, though not expressed quite alike in both. For instance, we say in English "I am sure," or "Quite so." In France we would say "*Pour sure*," or "*Parfaitement*." There is no common locality between the two languages; we cannot really make both correspond, for there seems to be no connection between them; but there it is, the same idea only expressed differently.

To the question, Where is it, this archetype of perfection? we can only say that it must be somewhere, though we only see its shadow as in the allegory. Why, we ask, was Plato driven to his concept of ideas? For the same reason that Ferdinand Lassalle, the foremost among the founders of Socialism in Germany, was driven to his, and he tried to put down in two big volumes all he could on just a hundred lines, which constituted the two great principles of Heracleitus, the famous early Greek philosopher of Ephesus. So great a thinker was Heracleitus, that he could in one word exhaust immense processes of thinking; he could in fact compress an ocean into a tabloid. This was the man who taught Plato, or rather from whom Plato derived his principles

PLATO

of thought, for he was dead when Plato was born. It was he who taught that nothing is being, and that we never step into the same river twice, meaning that everything in the world is in a state of flux or motion—*πάντα ῥεῖ*; that while it is, it is not; that the world is in a ceaseless state of change, nothing remaining the same for even two moments of time. All this is a bewildering idea. And Plato says of it that Heracleitus was quite right, that everything is in a state of flux; but somehow it did not seem quite satisfactory to him. He explains it by saying that it refers to sensible things only, things which affect our senses. These, indeed, are never the same; for the moment they go into existence, they go out of it again. These are like the shadows on the walls of the cave; but behind them there is something that remains, the true and the perfect, the real Platonic ideas. Where, then, are we to go to find these? It is not in space, for there we only have sensible matters, material things, which are for ever changing. We must go beyond and behind these. This argument of his is logically forceful, and no one has ever discovered a flaw in it. One of the greatest and most instructive English writers on philosophy was Ferrier. In reading him one feels one is dealing with an honest man, and in his "Lectures on Greek Philosophy" we see his life-long wrestle with these self-same problems.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Plato was not sufficiently sympathetic to him, but Heracleitus formed his profound study, and his writings are certainly the best we have on that philosopher.

If, then, these phenomena of the material senses are in constant flux, it follows that there must be *un genre* universal. We can know only such universals, and they are in the state of absolute completeness which we call Platonic ideas. There are no fragments or parts of these, but it is all pure unadulterated Perfection; and this has been proved to be the case from Plato to Schopenhauer, from Aristotle to Leibniz. We must not think that these are mere "isms" or a phantasmagoric series of non-existences. In the Platonic sense there is reality in them; constantly tumbling, it may be, into an abyss; but the ideas do exist. It is like that beautiful statue, buried deep in the ground, which was discovered at Melos, and a peasant who owned the land wanted to sell it. It was a matter of a few hundred francs only, but really no money could buy that statue, whereon was outlined the idea of beauty — beauty which was something eternal, though made two thousand years ago. There is the Venus of Milo, which was hidden away by the French on the taking of Paris by the Germans, when all the other treasures of the Louvre were left. This idealization of beauty was hidden away, and its hiding-place

PLATO

was known only to three men—an old man, a middle-aged man, and a young man.

There are many things which Plato talks of in his "Symposium" which we cannot mention, but piercing through the ages and the centuries we can find the truth, and how it was that such men as Scopas, and Praxiteles, and Phidias, or whoever it may have been, came to the idea of beauty. One of these ideas of beauty is in the Louvre for any one to see who has eyes to see. It was to this statue that Heinrich Heine came, and when he saw it he collapsed, for he had never realized the beauty that was here. It was not for him to consider then whether it was the Venus of Milo, or the Venus of Cnidus, or any other Venus. All that was of no moment to him; what he had before him was the real type, the real idea. Here is beauty in all her lines, and they are so simple that we know not from whence the effect comes, this unapproachable Diana-like beauty, but there it is! We may regard one cheek and then the other, her lovely eyes, and her beautiful mouth; there we see the expression of virgin beauty such as we have never seen before. It is all a most beautiful unison between thought and emotion, the most perfect expression which poets have dreamed of. It is not to be looked at only, it is to be seen. But we remember what Heracleitus said, *πάντα ῥεῖ!* It does not last, it is ever-changing, and yet here

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

we are in the presence of beauty which was beauty more than two thousand years ago, in the presence of lips which invite to kisses that no man dare give and live, for do we not see the utter severity of the two corners of the mouth? To see such beauty is to burst into tears, for who could behold such beauty and remain calm? Prosper Mérimée wrote a story about one of these Venuses, the Venus d'Ille. If we look at those limbs, the relation to each other is so perfect, so chaste, that no man dare touch them. All the dreams and ideals of man are there, and this is art, this is the manifestation of the idea.

Then, again, we have that famous statue of Laocoön and his two sons. Here we see a father struggling for his sons, who are all entwined in the dread coils of the destroying serpents. If we read Lessing and Goethe on the subject of Laocoön we will find an impression that will never leave us, for there is an idea behind that sculpture, and we are in the presence of a Platonic idea. We see the half-opened mouth of the father, who looks round at the death of his sons. We may not be fathers, we may have no sons, but still we feel that we know that man. And where it touches us is that we feel that we are with our sons, and that we are seeing our ideals slain by the serpents. There are our dreams and our desires, our everything, and destiny coils round them, and we feel that we are Laocoön. There

PLATO

is the ever-recurring fight of personality against materiality. It is not only a fine piece of marble, but it is eternal truth and personality fighting against other and material causes. We feel that Plato is right, after all, that ideas have become flesh in the marble, and have spoken their message to us. We may give colour, we may give lines, but our efforts will be wasted, and we shall never do anything unless there is the Platonic idea behind us.

Let us now see what we can get from that wonderful intellect of Leonardo da Vinci on our subject. He left an enormous number of manuscripts on all kinds of subjects, and his life has been well told in the volume by Séailles. He thought that Plato was wrong, and that Nature was greater than the ideal, and so he set to work to study Nature. With him, to draw a man in anger, and a woman as enticing, was true to Nature. He studied anatomy, too, to a large extent, and dissected a great number of corpses. To such an extent had he carried this study as to make Hunter, the great anatomist, say, "I thought I knew something about anatomy, but Leonardo da Vinci knew more." And all this was to prove that beauty was a copy of Nature, and that the better we knew anatomy the more we should excel in art. That, however, was really the secret reason why Leonardo da Vinci painted so little. It is not the anatomy of a thing, but

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

the Platonic idea behind it, which gives it flesh and makes it live. The equestrian statue by Leonardo da Vinci, at Sforza, did not prove that his theory was correct. He wanted to give an Arab horse at his best. That animal is so beautiful that a man can fall in love with one as with a beautiful woman ; it is an idea of beauty, the hoofs of which go about like the fingers of a pianist on a piano when he is moving. But the knowledge of anatomy spoilt it ; it was too real. The complaint was that it was forced. Thus we see that if we do not follow the ideal in art we produce what is unreal. We may be perfect in anatomy, but unless we study the idea behind it we are lost.

How shall we know what that idea is ? Some people have it ; they are born with it. Great doers are also great artists. Poets are doers, and to them it is quite evident. A man of action is both a poet and an artist. Columbus did more good to this country than any Englishman ever born, for he placed England in the centre of the universe, whereas before it was on the edge. He placed America on the other side ; and so he did for England more than the English have ever realized. What he did was a work of art, and he had the Platonic idea. Had America never existed Columbus would have discovered it.

Another great doer was Jeanne d'Arc. Here was a young French girl, who knew not of battles,

PLATO

nor could tell one weapon from another ; what could it mean that she was to be the saviour of France ? A Du Guesclin had once saved France, and a Pardiac might do it now ; but for a young unlearned maiden such a thing was amazing ! She knew the Platonic idea was there. When asked how she could do it, she answered simply, "*Je le ferai moi.*" She knew it, and she spoke of " voices " she had heard. That was a sacred way of saying that in her soul she felt and knew the sublime character of her mission. It was the consciousness of a Platonic idea. And so it was with Napoleon, when he was on the battle-field, and when nothing had been done, he said, " Italy is mine." This was not arrogance, but the anticipation of things from an innate consciousness, a Platonic idea. He knew beforehand ; it was the " voices " he had heard, and nothing could stop him. What made Raphael a great painter ? It was the Platonic idea he pursued. When he had done a Madonna he tried it again and again, then he tried a Fornarina ; but it would not satisfy him. The truth is that he had in his imagination a painting infinitely greater than anything he had ever painted. If he had been born without arms he still would have painted, he still would have risen to the height he did.

Why do violinists or pianists differ so much ? Because the great musician has the Platonic idea of beauty behind him, and he tries to copy things

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

internally; while the other one, the one who never will be great, is eaten up with *dilettante* contentedness and optimism, which are the death of Art. Optimism is too closely allied to humanity, to suffering. Art must indeed be optimistic, but artists are gloomy and melancholy, because they are struggling with Platonic ideas; struggling against the death of the great ideal that is in their hearts; it is the Laocoön again. They feel like Macaulay, when he was presented by his publishers with a cheque for £20,000 for the triumphant sale of his *History*. Such a sum had never been paid for any single book, and one would think that an author who had so earned the appreciation of the public would have been highly gratified. But it was not so with Macaulay. He felt poor and miserable at the moment, and taking his copy of Thucydides down from the shelf, said, "What a wretched book I have written in comparison with this." There was his Platonic idea which was Thucydides. And so, too, Beethoven who was in a great "swear" when he heard Handel. He felt he could never reach that Platonic idea, never realize what Plato says, that every object has its idea behind it. Even if it be an ordinary bedstead, it has an archetype of a perfect bedstead behind it; or it may be a chair, or a key, or a match. Behind the chair there would be the idea of comfort; and if we went to Florence we might see such a chair which is as near the ideal as such

PLATO

a thing can be brought, comfort being marked on every line and curve of it. And so it is that behind all imperfect things there must be perfection ; and this brings us back to the proof of the existence of the Perfect. For if imperfect things exist, why cannot the perfect, of which the imperfect is but the shadow on the wall ? It may seem a contradiction in terms, but do not let us mix up universals with Platonic ideas. The complete universal is always behind everything. If we take our own individuality it is but a reflection of the idea, and we say, shall it never return ? There is an unending process of creation going on out of nothing, and it will so go on for billions of years. It is always something coming out of nothing, and the personality of man or woman never recurs. Behind all this is the question of immortality, the question of religion, and there it is that we find the application of Platonic ideas to the ordinary things of life. Is there such a thing as realistic Art, or are these terms contradictory ? He only is a great Artist who creates the truest type of the Real,—the Ideal.

CHAPTER VIII

BEFORE we continue our discourse on Art, it is, perhaps, necessary to premise a few remarks on some points which were alluded to in the preceding chapter, as there appears to have been a misconception of what was actually said. It was never, for instance, said that art was gloomy. On the contrary, art itself is one of our great consolations, and therefore cannot be anything but cheerful; and as far as religion participates in art, it also gives us the same consolation. Artists, however, are gloomy, and it is necessary that we should carefully bear in mind this distinction. In Aristotle, in the thirtieth chapter of his "Problemata," we find him asking, "Why is it that all great statesmen, artists, poets, musicians are so melancholy? Why are all men of genius sad?" Because they are in the throes of the birth of an idea; because all artists are ever struggling with great Platonic ideas, and they cannot quite bring them forth, they cannot quite express them. Art is not dawdling through an art-gallery and languidly saying, "Ah, how weird! How pretty! How lovely!" No; art is energy,

PLATO

initiative, agonizing intensity ; it is, indeed, war. And so it is that the obstacles seem insurmountable to these artists, they feel they cannot do it, and hence they become melancholy. What are these statesmen, politicians, artists striving for ? Is it not unity ; unity and harmony of idea in marble, in words, or in politics ? Thus we find Cavour wanted to make the unity of Italy. It is the very thing a sculptor tries to do in marble ; the transcendental unity and harmony which he tries to symbolize and incarnate from what was before but fragments in Nature. And when these artists fail they become miserable. Was not Cavour almost broken-hearted when he resigned office after the peace of Villafranca when he found Austria was left in possession of Venetia ? Even Leonardo da Vinci had these extraordinary struggles, and could not stand against them. It is the artist, as Plato hints, who is melancholy, but art is not sad. The unity of Italy is not a sad consummation ; but each of us who strives to give birth to a great idea, be it in politics or art, must make up his mind to have his Calvary. That is inevitable.

And then, again, there is the question of music, and the remarks made in the last chapter, that there is no music in Nature, have been disputed. This implies that the author can have no knowledge of such things, when, as a matter of fact, he comes from a country which is steeped

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

in music, and he was bitten by the rabid, musical dog when he was but five years of age. He can, indeed, say that he has suffered, and has been a martyr to music, and can state with confidence that there is no music in Nature. In music there must be scales, but in Nature there are none. Nature has deep tones, high cadences but no scales ; and without scales, hundreds of scales, music is impossible. In a baby's prattle, for instance, there is rhythm, but no language ; and at the age of two or three we may say that a child is articulating ideas. But, however much most of us may be enchanted with the babblings of a baby, *le gazouillement d'enfant*, we cannot in sober language call it language. Who, again, can have gone into a forest and not have been transported with the notes of the nightingale, or the lark, or many another bird ? They may inspire poets ; even the mocking-bird might send a thrill of transport through us, but we cannot say that all this is music. Music means articulate sound ; rhythms and cadences ; and not only solitary notes and tones. And in that sense Nature has no music, and no poems ; and art does not exist in Nature.

We cannot dogmatize on these things. If we go to the early fathers, what do we find them doing ? They simply disdain Nature ; they look upon it as something incomplete, low, and sinful ; and in their idea of religion they felt that the

PLATO

more distant they were from Nature the better it was for them. This was totally different to the idea of the Greeks, who were at one with Nature. They identified themselves with Nature, and looked upon things natural as really not ugly. In all her expressions Nature was beautiful to them, and especially in the human form. We find Herodotus, when he speaks of the "barbarians," saying, "They are ashamed of their nudity, we Greeks are not." These are men who believed in the glory of the body. In contrast with Art, Nature was lower; and though they were at one with Nature, they improved on it, and they called this *τέχνη*, which means Art proper.

The great saints of the Catholic Church tried to fly from Nature as a snare and a temptation, something to be shunned and to be despised. To them Nature was the origin and the source of all evil. Plato, however, says that all evils are not in nature, but outside nature. It is only St. Francis d'Assissi, in the Catholic Church, who had the courage to preach that Nature is within the realm of grace and not outside it. To him the trees, the flowers, were all brothers and sisters; they were all the expressions of God, as he said. Here was indeed a peculiar combination of Christianity and the Hellenic spirit! The Greeks also loved Nature, and did not feel that there was any great chasm between them and it. But they had, at the same time, a great

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

idea of art, because they said that it was superior to nature. They said that they were only a part of nature, but that within that nature they could re-create another nature, and that was art. And what example have we of this art with regard to the great man whom we have been discussing? The first and most efficient picture of art comes really from Plato, who was a master of it. Subjects which would be arid become alive and full of meaning in the artistic surroundings in which he places them. We shall find this if we analyze one of his great dialogues, where he shows himself at his best. It is by analyzing the "Symposium" of Plato that we shall get to the very heart and essence of art. There we shall find all the art of system, all the beauty of arrangement, all the urbanity which goes to make him Plato. He is the most suggestive thinker that ever lived. He made mistakes, but even his mistakes are fertile; they contain the half of truth, and are not blunders which one would scorn. The mistakes of Aristotle are not so; while those of later writers are perfectly puerile. In the "Symposium" itself there are no mistakes. It is all a great work of art, like that Parthenon which stood on the Acropolis as the crowning marvel of Greek genius, and it has never been equalled. It is written in simple Greek; that marvellous and beautiful language which combines in itself the larger qualities of all the best languages of the

PLATO

world; and there never will be a language like it. It is the soul of music, with its soft “*v*” so musical and sweet; then the wonderful “*θ*” which we despise; and the aspirate, or the rough breathing which is so peculiar a characteristic of the Spanish language. The whole forms an orchestral language for the expression of thought to which there is no equal. And so it is that the thoughts of Plato, coming, as it were, in the nick of time, build up in this language the “*Symposium*,” which is a very Parthenon in words. An analysis will show us how the process of building has been carried on, and what the style of its architecture is. It is indeed a marvellous work of art, and it will help us to see what art is; and also to apply it to architecture and to the other arts. It puts the whole subject before us not only directly, but also by innuendo and by suggestion. There is not only the *entendu*, but also the *sous-entendu* of what we should know about art.

It is a banquet; there are a number of *dramatis personæ*; and it is in a single room. Here the guests meet, not so much to eat, for of that they do very little, but to talk very much. It is not as if we were present at this banquet. It is a description given by one man to another of his own particular views of some of the deep and stirring phases of human life. Plato felt that if he wrote out his views in prose narrative they

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

would be heavy reading ; so he has the skill to give them to us as a dialogue, and makes an ethical narrative of them. He puts it in the mouth of Aristodemus, who tells the story to Apollodorus ; and he makes it ethical in spite of all its dramatic qualities. And thus it goes on until Plato repeats it to us, as it were, at fourth hand. In all this we have the perfect equilibrium in mind which is the characteristic of an Attic story.

The story was that Agathon, a great writer of tragedies, had won a very great triumph at the public contest, and to celebrate the event he invited his friends on the next day to a banquet. The guests were just ordinary gentlemen of the day, who could converse freely in simple language on the current topics which interested humanity. For it must be understood that to the Greek mind wisdom ever so deep was not worth hearing unless it was discussed by the cultured classes. These guests are made to express their thoughts, which are put clearly, and not as Berkeley, the great Irish thinker, said of modern thinkers, that they raised too much dust to enable themselves to see into things. The Greeks did not raise dust ; and it is not true that we must go through thousands of years of study to understand a philosopher. This may be true in law, with regard to which it has been said that it takes at least fifteen years before we can ever understand

PLATO

Justinian. In the "Symposium" we see it all clearly, and what the idea is that Plato wishes to teach us. At this banquet we see Phædrus and Pausanias; there is Eriximachus who represents the medical profession, and Agathon the great tragedian; then there is Aristophanes, the greatest writer of comedies; and finally comes Socrates, the greatest of philosophers. The story goes that Socrates came in very late, the intention being that he should sit next to, and on the left of, Agathon the host, and so to be the very last to speak. One seat was left vacant opposite, which was afterwards occupied by the drunken Alcibiades. The talk began by one of the guests proposing to celebrate the victory of Agathon. And so it went on until they said, "Let us talk of love, or Eros." They all had solid, good, and practical things to say, things that really make for the harmony of the world. In increasing stages the talk continues until it reaches Aristophanes. What he thought of love we have already had in his myth, which is the Rabelaisque myth of the four-fold man. After the master of comedy comes the turn of Agathon, and he, instead of giving us definitions, talks rapturously of what is a beautiful, transcendental charm of life. It finally comes to the turn of Socrates to have his say on love. When Socrates opens his mouth on this question of love, we feel that it is not only a fine speech at a banquet, but that we are treading

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

on tender soil, for he actually anticipates historical events. He does not give what he thinks or feels as coming from himself, but he gives it as coming from the mouth of Diotima, the virgin prophetess of Mantinea. This great subject of love, so near the Divine, must be from the lips of an immaculate virgin and no other. This anticipated the greatest truth in our religion, when the highest embodiment of love was born of a virgin; and it also appears in the view in which the Athenians held their goddess Athene as the greatest of immaculate virgins. Thus is it that these Greeks anticipated more than one of the great truths of our religion. They felt that something godlike must come from a virgin; and so it has been through all time, that to save mankind in whole or in part, it must be through immaculate virginity. A striking instance is that of Jeanne d'Arc. When France was nearly ruined, it was an immaculate virgin, and not her great men, that saved her.

So the summing up of what Plato had to say about love was neither through the judicious Phædrus, nor the cunning Eriximachus, nor the witty Aristophanes, but it came from Socrates; and even then it is placed before us not as the views of Socrates, but as those coming from the mouth of a virgin. "I have got it from the mouth of Diotima," he says, "the virgin priestess of Mantinea, and she told me what this love is."

We may have the idea that nothing has

PLATO

intention, but everything has its *Symposium*; but we shall soon find that where there is intention, there is inevitably boredom. Nature has always an intention. The bird's sweetest song is when it wants to find its mate; it is love that makes the thing complete. But if we want absolute *naïveté*, it is not in Nature that we shall find it existing, but in Art. And so we find Socrates saying, "I do not get these ideas from my own mind, but from a seer;" and that seer was an immaculate prophetess. And in this way, it may be, some new Jeanne d'Arc will yet come to France; but it must always be an immaculate conception, for love will never be born in any other way. It is a historical fact that immaculate virginity has an enormous force over a nation, and there is more behind it than the mere mythological allusion. It is that love and goodness are one and the same thing.

Socrates had scarcely finished his speech when an entirely new scene comes on, which would touch and send a thrill through any one who has a feeling of real beauty. Alcibiades enters the banquet-room, and when we hear what he has to say about Socrates, we recognize that here we have the great idea of immortality in his speech on love; it is something which no modern science can give us. And this comes from a man who is a most desperate *viveur*; and famous, too, for being perfectly beautiful. He was not a Nero, but no

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

one had enjoyed the good things of life more than he had. This is the man who comes into the banquet-room in a half-drunken state, with a beautiful flute-girl in his arm, the very picture of fast, careless life ; and he asks what they are doing. On learning that they are discoursing on love, he asks for permission to speak of and to crown not Agathon, but Socrates whom he loves." And this love for Socrates he proceeds to describe with the simplicity of a child. It is like a grand chord of the music of Mozart, which strikes into each human heart. We cannot stand it ; it is not for human nerves, but for nerves divine. It touches our nerves and makes us happy. Then we feel what love for such a man means, and we see that Plato was, indeed, the herald of the Christian religion, and its worship and love for the one great Man.

And so the story of Alcibiades continues. He points to Socrates and says, "Look at him ; he looks like a Silen, and is as ugly as any sculptured Satyr ; there is nothing in those looks to make one love him. But if we take off the head of the Satyr, we shall find inside a divine countenance, the statue of a god. He is the most dangerous of men in Athens ; for he goes about talking to the people, the common people in the market-place, and he puts things exactly upside down to them. But he makes them love him, for he alone has truth and sense and divine wisdom. In war, too,

PLATO

he is the bravest of the brave; for was it not at Potidæa, when I was nearly lost, that his strong arm saved me? He alone can stand privations that no other can. When absorbed in his deep thoughts he can stand in one place for twenty-four hours at a time. He is the best of husbands, the best of citizens, the best of judges. He can resist all temptations. He likes beautiful men and women, but he resists them all; he resisted the lovely Phryne, though he felt her touch for three days. And he has resisted me, even me the beautiful Alcibiades. I try to fly from him, but I cannot leave him, because his words are so enchanting, and I could listen to him for ever."

Now, this great story, this picture of Plato, we read when we are young with a want of understanding. We read it then simply and purely for the purpose of finding and solving grammatical questions on the Greek language. We are then simply bored by it. But when we read it in after-life, with mature thoughts, we see things with other eyes. The words seem full of life's meanings. We see how Plato is foreshadowing history; even the history of our religion, and the religion itself. We feel we are thrilled by it; that we cannot read any more because it is too overwhelming. We feel that it is peculiarly mysterious, and that we must leave it alone. Plato anticipates all modern history. What is he the *viveur*, approaching the great thinking man,

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

but like a Magdalen ; and does not Socrates himself foreshadow the much greater Jesus ? He foreshadows all those who have expressed love in all its greater and more divine aspects. Now, when Alcibiades left the banquet-room the other guests also departed one by one, and there were left but three—Agathon, Aristophanes, and Socrates ; the three great forces of Athens, representing tragedy, comedy, and philosophy. These then discussed reason ; and Socrates said that the right sort of poet, the greatest poet, is both a tragedian and a comedian. This, however, was never realized until Shakespeare, who combined the two in himself. This further discussion ended in Agathon and Aristophanes falling off to sleep. But what does Socrates do ? He gets up and takes a bath, and then he goes to the gymnasium to his everyday work.

These, then, are the ribs and the bones of that work of art, the "Symposium." What does it all mean, and what is art as exemplified by this work ? In his "Dialogues" Plato goes into dialectics, and he tries to find concepts. In the "Symposium" there is nothing of the kind ; there is no scholastic fence, it is all art. Where he knows that dialectics would fail, he calls in art to emphasize the truth he wishes to enforce. And where a subject would in itself be arid, and he wants to tell us the greatest truths in philosophy, he clothes it with artistic

PLATO

surroundings that compel the attention ; and this in itself is a great art. When we are young we think we are awfully clever, and if we are confronted with problems affecting immortality, infinity, God, politics, state, parliament or parties, we imagine that if we only put our intellects into motion and bore and bore sufficiently, we shall finally solve those problems. But a mature man knows that that is impossible. Plato knows where dialectics fail and where art must step in. He wants simply to give us truth, a perfectly naïve statement of truth, without feats of logics or intellectual acrobatics. And for this reason it is that in his "Symposium" he turns the whole thing into a work of art. He knows that to grasp philosophy we must graft it on personality. Modern philosophers write books in paragraphs ; their ideas of God or of man are so many cut and dried statements which are given to us to accept as truths, whether we like it or not. To make their books works of art is quite beside the question, and they despise the idea. They want to give truth as physicists or chemists give the laws of combination or formation of material substances ; as water is a combination of oxygen and hydrogen. This may be quite right in chemistry or in physics but it is not so in philosophy. Whether we take Aristotle or Schopenhauer or Herbert Spencer, they none of them can do it ; it is impossible. Immortality, for instance, cannot be described in

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

this fashion. It is Plato who has thrown the best light on immortality in his "Phædon." And again in the "Symposium," when it is love that is being discussed, we have it from Socrates as Diotima condescends to give him the truth. And when we hear Alcibiades speak of his love for Socrates, then we see Socrates stand out in the background of Athens. It is his love of truth and we know that we see immortality, because we feel that there was in that man something transcending the ordinary limits of human thoughts and existence. This is infinitely more convincing than any set of rules of modern philosophers. The trick of the "Symposium" is an art, to transform dialectics into an articulated situation ; and Plato knew that as long as we cannot graft our teaching on a personality we shall never move a human heart. What we want are personalities ; and we are living on personalities. For instance, in politics, why is there such great difference between England and Montenegro ? Because in England there are great political personalities, and Montenegro is without them. The ideas of the people who become personalities may be wrong, but that has nothing to do with the question. To the Greeks, Socrates was a great religious and a philosophical personality, and on that personality was grafted a truth.

So Plato wanted to teach philosophy by art, and that is why he brings in his different men

PLATO

to speak in the “*Symposium*,” beginning with Phædrus, and going on to Pausanias, and through the rest of them to Socrates in regular order, so as to show by graded changes that all they say is not comparable to what philosophy has to say. We see before us in beautiful order this great verbal temple of the “*Symposium*” as we view in marble that other type of Greek grandeur, the artistic beauty of the Parthenon. When we come, then, to a philosophical standpoint, we understand our own beautiful story, told in the Bible, of Jesus, how the word became flesh. In the Platonic sense this was not dialectical; and this Platonic idea came true not many hundred years later. And so it is that when we go into a beautiful church we feel an emotion that something is going on which touches the deep fibres of our hearts. When we read the “*Symposium*” it is a like feeling. We see each actor in his turn serving only to show up the central figure. It may be the passionate outburst of admiration of Alcibiades, or the subtle irony of another, each in turn is leading up to the highest, the figure that expresses love. Here in the “*Symposium*” we see the whole of life. And all this is really art, and art is a Platonic idea which has become materialized.

There were many arts that came after Plato, or as a sequence to his thoughts; but only three arts, so-called, came after the Greeks. The great

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

art of sculpture, the language of marble, is lost since then. No modern sculptor can approach the Greeks in this respect; we can no more talk in marble than we can in Greek. The three arts that we have acquired since the Greeks are painting, architecture, and music; and in these modern arts we certainly excel the Greeks. How, then, may we ask, do the Platonic ideas apply to these three modern arts? Music is the most philosophic of the arts, and it is in music that Plato's ideas show forth more than in the others. It is the very replica of Plato's ideas. The struggle that goes on in a symphony of Beethoven is the struggle of one's own heart. We feel an interest, a something which no thinker and no poet can give us. It has a strange effect, for in music the Platonic idea comes more direct to us, searching our hearts as no words can. And this is music, which appeals to us more than any other art. In a moment we see our life, our childhood, our sunny hours, the paradise of our first youth. Here it is at once, our first idea; it is the Platonic idea, not clothed, not overburdened with words. As Schopenhauer says, in music we reach the deepest depths of our emotions. It comes direct to us, as in the fifth symphony of Beethoven, where we feel that destiny is knocking at our door. When the palpitation of G and E flat begins we feel awe-struck, and a shock goes over us. It does not take a volume, and no book can reach us

PLATO

as this does. Whether it be Beethoven or Schumann, they reach us as nothing else can.

It is the same thing in painting. Great painters are also men who express Platonic ideas. What testifies to the prominence of the Florentines in the world of art, and especially of painting? We know that they had in their midst a Platonic school, and it was Marsilius Ficinus who discoursed to them on Plato at the same time as they gave birth to their Platonic ideas. This was not mere accident; such a word in this connection is sacrilegious. There was, on the contrary, true harmony between things. As Leonardo da Vinci said, "When they heard of these things they wanted to put Plato, they wanted to put his eternal ideas into their pictures." Behind these rough lines were Platonic ideas of prudence, of vigilance, that became idealized under the brush; these old Florentines lived, in fact, under the influence of Platonic ideas.

Plato again anticipated history by centuries. He anticipated the Catholic Church of Christianity. There is a peculiar parallelism too in Plato between him and our gospels, where he said that in truth there is no imitation. Truth imitates itself. And in his "Laws," and in his dialogue called the "Sophist," he anticipates Gothic architecture. He pretended that he did not like the architecture of his time; and by the description of what he did like he gave us a clue to things which came

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

centuries after. Greek architecture did not aspire to the infinite ; it was made up of horizontal and not vertical lines. If we look at the beautifully preserved Greek temple at Nimes, in the south of France, it will bring back to us the famous words from Faust, " It is from this earth that well up all my joys." The Greeks loved this world, and this is the expression of their idea of worship. It is small ; the interior is so small that it is not meant to hold people for worship, as no Greek ever went inside their temples. That was meant for the gods only. They said their prayers at home. When we have seen such a temple as this we feel we want a different temple, a different place of worship. In Gothic architecture the interior is a great thing. It is built for the people, and will take thousands inside. If we visit the cathedrals at Canterbury, at Rheims, at Amiens, we see the same idea in them all. Every stone, moulding, and column is different ; and all these things appeal to us and we see at once why the Platonic idea of architecture is far and away beyond the idea held by the Greeks. We see in it the struggle between gravitation and aspiration. We see in the Gothic, that even the gargoyles and the buttresses have all a meaning of their own. Is all this art or not art ? And how does it all stand to Plato ? We shall indeed find them all foreshadowed by him ; for we hear him say, " Our architecture is not the proper

PLATO

architecture," and that he would not permit it in his ideal state. What he wanted was an architecture that was more spiritual; that reminded one more of the lessons of the next world; that expressed more the ideals that showed a belief in immortality. "Away with these decorations and colours," is what he said; for the Greeks went in for painting their buildings. Now, in Gothic architecture all this is different, and one feels that it is really spiritualized. In the Middle Ages people were ashamed of things material, of wood and stone; and thought that life was only fit to live in the next world. So they took to putting shape to their stones, and really so humanized them that we feel as if they were moving and singing objects. In Rheims, in Amiens we will find this. We do not see a portal to a church but what we think that a big abbot is posted in the centre of it; and as we enter there seem to be nothing but saints around his head; and behind him, too, all the stones are humanized. That Gothic church is really like one of the religious processions of the Middle Ages, with the abbot at the head, and rows of knights at the two sides. Here was spirit representing aspiration; here was all the great scholasticism of the Middle Ages in religious elevation and spiritualization. And that is Gothic architecture which is intended to represent the spiritual principle, where every stone is spiritualized and the entire fabric is spiritual.

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Even the turrets at the top of the building seem to want to go higher in ecstasies of religion. It is not enough for them to want to go to the holy country ; they want to go higher and higher, and straight into heaven.

All this was not Greek, and the Greeks paid no attention to what Plato said about architecture. What they wanted was moderate architecture. $\Sigmaωφροσύνη$ was their guiding principle in everything, and they held to it in architecture as well. If they had been shown the Venus of Milo, or the head of Homer in the Louvre ; yes, they would understand these, but not the architecture that Plato wanted. It is in his book of the "Laws," where he writes on the question of education, that Plato gives us an insight into what is real architecture. And if the Greeks did not appreciate it, can it be said that Gothic architecture is inferior to the Greek architecture ? What is the Platonic idea behind it ? And this brings us to the question, is there a Platonic idea behind landscape painting ? Is there art in still-life, if there is no Platonic idea in Nature ? The latter is a sign of repression, for we will find that in the period when the *rococo* in art prevailed those nations were governed by absolutism. There was no freedom, therefore no freedom of idea. Our salvation cannot come from a tenet, but only from a personality. It cannot be given to us in the way that a Roman, if he wanted to make us perfectly happy, would say,

PLATO

"Become a *civis Romanus*, and you are quite right." Or, again, as the Athenians would say, " We will make you an Athenian citizen." No, that is not so. In art, in the aspiring to ideals, there is no formality, there is no law which can make us a part of any state. Our salvation is in personality alone, which is derived from one man. It is like the Christian religion. If we do not believe in one person, in whom alone there is salvation, then we are no Christians. This is why the Christian fathers said that Plato was a Christian. We have it in the writings of Irenæus and of Augustine, and the idea was that in Plato there was that mixture of art and philosophy which, by leaving on one side dialectics and logic, became incarnate in a personality. This is what Rationalists do not understand. They can only think of ideas as provable by ordinary logic. They do not see that ideas must become persons to be efficient; that is what escapes them. It was Gladstone who said, "I never met a man who was active in politics, and was not also a believer in religion." That is what is needed. The word must become flesh; Socrates in philosophy; Themistocles in politics; Jesus in religion; and that is the meaning of our "Symposium."

Art can never be art unless we carry it into ordinary, everyday life; and when we do that we shall find that it will deepen and enhance the pleasure and profit of living. Where Art is not

AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

taken seriously, that nation is suffering from a great lack, the lack of everything that makes life worth having. It may be a small matter, but let us take the art of letter-writing. How many of us violate the very first principles of art by the monotonous use, for an opening, of that tiresome personal pronoun "I." There are many ways of expressing one's ideas, and as one grows more artistic, one learns to fight shy of that pronoun for an opening, and to begin the letter somewhat more artistically. With all the thirst for ethical moralizing which characterizes the present day, we might turn to Plato, who teaches us more in that artistic dialogue of the "Symposium," where no dialectical acrobatics are indulged in, than in all the rest of his dialogues put together. Here we will find him anticipating this thirst, and teaching us the art of persuasion. Persuasion is really an art. We cannot, without this high refinement of art which we call persuasion, convince the other fellow. Success, indeed, means the persuasion of the largest number to one's own views and ideas.

It is vain for a man to say that he does not care for art. In art we reach the highest achievement of our mind. Art is everything in which there is unity; everything in which there is harmony and cadence and rhythm. Even the business man might be an artist, for Art throws immense waves over the field of activity. Art at

PLATO

its highest is a combination of everything that is good and wise and strong ; it is both philosophy and action ; it is both faith and science ; both science and religion ; and we should study it in all aspects of our life. If all that we have been discussing here has nothing to do with Plato, then we do not understand Plato at all. In connection with the national importance of art we have a prominent instance of the Japanese, a people who excel in art. They are, indeed, a living illustration of the "Symposium" of Plato, possessing, as they do, all the forces which go to make a great and a prosperous nation.

All this is of most serious concern to this great nation. We should cultivate the sense of art in all its branches, and make art our real sphere, wherein we shall be both human and great. It is thus by individual exertions that we shall combine and make the nation greater and better than it was before. When we have done this, then Plato will sit at another banquet, at our own banquet, and we shall drink to the great Greek sage.

THE END

